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NEA Today

April 2003

The Magazine of the National Education Association

Announcing important changes to the NEA Life/Health Insurance Programs. See page 42.

Are You Ready?

NEA Today

April 2003

Volume 21 • Number 7

COVER STORY

Are You Ready?

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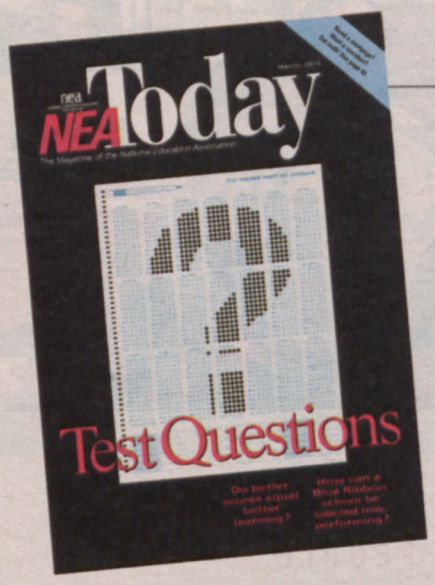
Making Public Schools Great for Every Child

Cover photo Daniel Peck, PeckStudios. Photo opposite page: Paul Hartmann; clockwise from upper left: Ellen Banner, Kyle Brehm, Matt Ferguson, John Whitehead, and Gary Emeigh.



Letters

ON TEACHERS' SHOULDERS

I am a special education teacher frustrated by the ESEA (March cover story). When is our government going to ask educators their opinions about how best to run our schools? After all, aren't we the ones who deal with the unfed, tired, and poor all day long? Why are educators the only ones being held responsible for students' actions? Why are parents not being held accountable as well? It is a team effort to help students. I thought I would be able to make a difference with students and help them make better choices for themselves. It is difficult to accomplish that in a society that values professional athletes more than teachers. Where would all the athletes, lawyers, and doctors be if it weren't for teachers?

Randee Senescu
Clawson, Michigan

ESEA intends to help all children become proficient in reading, math, and science. And how will this be proven? By one test given once a year. I wonder if this is a true representation of our students.

I wouldn't want my performance as a teacher graded according to the results of one test. We need to look at a bigger picture. How does each student perform in the classroom? Can the student solve problems? We don't go through life showing our abilities by answering multiple-choice questions.

I see a lot of pressure being put on educators, parents, and, yes, children. As an educator, my focus is becoming test-oriented rather than teacher/learner-oriented. My kindergarten students are expected to know an increasing amount of information—to know enough so they can pass the test. Are we going to perform to our highest potential if we know our schools will be portrayed as failures if our students don't "pass the test"? Do lawmakers think this will attract better teachers? I know I don't.

Jennie Marshall
Andover, Connecticut

The overemphasis on test scores has changed the type of "leader" managing our schools. Principals, curriculum coordinators, and district superintendents have detached themselves from true education in favor of the business of producing a test score. Our schools are becoming sweatshops for teachers and students with clearly defined boundaries drawn between them and the school administration.

I believe that the high-stakes testing plan crafted by politicians will crumble because of its cost and complete lack of common sense. Students are human beings, not widgets, and their development and worth never will be measured by a test score. Sadly, the politicians will not be held accountable for their lack of understanding of the education process.

There always will be teachers who are capable, committed, and prepared to meet their students' needs, but they will be led by administrators incapable of innovation and educational vision.

James D. Mandigo
Houston, Texas

As an educator in a middle school, I would like to respond to the article "Blue ribbon or Below Par?" from the March issue. I would like to suggest that the science department at Hart Middle School take students to a different level of learning. Instead of shutting down a construction site because it is polluting the river—and consequently taking away people's jobs—have students help the business owner develop the necessary equipment to keep the river clean and the construction site open. This would satisfy environmental responsibility and help the workers remain gainfully employed in an uncertain economy. I believe that this would be "an unforgettable learning experience for eighth graders."

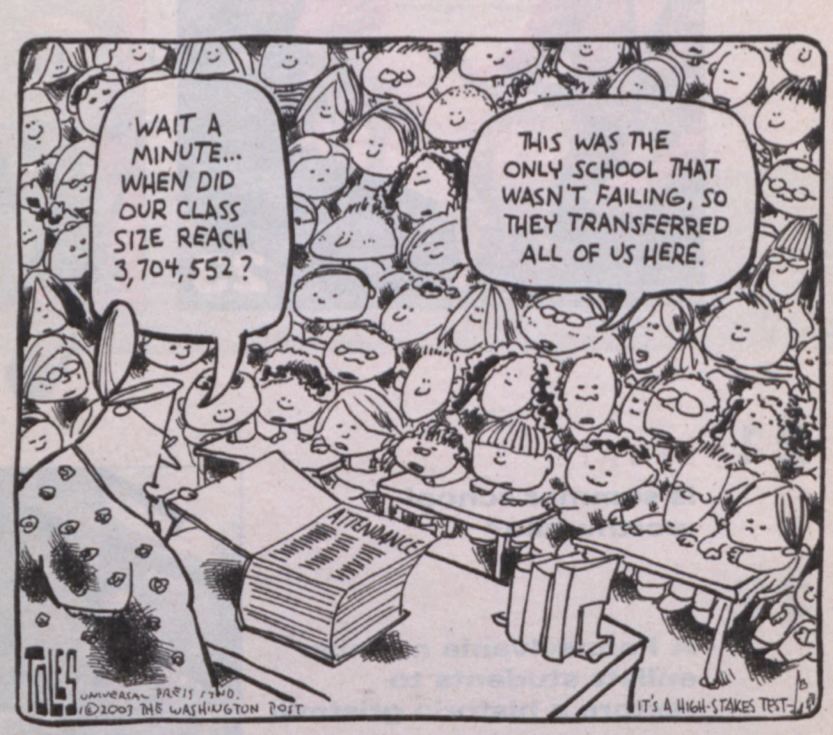
Michelle Tyree
Naples, New York

STUDENTS' SPECIAL NEEDS

I would like to respond to the "Dear Web Editor" letter featured in the Wired section (March). The classroom teacher asked about resources to help a visually impaired student review her classmates' work.

The classroom teacher should contact the teacher of visually impaired students who serves her student. If she is unaware of such a teacher, she should try and look at the student's IEP. If there is not an IEP, the student should be referred to a teacher who works with visually impaired students for an assessment. This teacher can assist with needed equipment and materials. The classroom teacher did not specify whether the student uses large print or Braille. There are many different ways that the student's editing needs could be met, from scanning and translating the information into Braille to enlarging the print to meet the student's needs.

Sheryl Schmidt
San Bernardino, California


WAIT A MINUTE... WHEN DID OUR CLASS SIZE REACH 3,704,552?
THIS WAS THE ONLY SCHOOL THAT WASN'T FAILING, SO THEY TRANSFERRED ALL OF US HERE.
ATTENDANCE
TOLES
©2007 THE WASHINGTON POST
IT'S A HIGH-STAKES TEST-
1-5-07

SEARCHING THE STACKS

I was very disappointed with "Book Talk" (February cover story). I was stunned because the article did not mention the school library, except as the place where Tammy Dorsten's students demonstrated their wax museum. While almost every teacher provides a classroom book collection for students, the school library still should be considered the place with the widest selection and variety of reading material.

I agree it is a great idea to have various end products when students are reading—no one loves a good book discussion group more than a librarian. School librarians have wonderful expertise that supports reading programs. After all, the mission of a school library is to support the school curriculum in its entirety. I believe it is a disservice to students to omit the school library and librarian from the process.

Deb Machonis
Ephrata, Pennsylvania

SEX EDUCATION

In your February Debate, Elizabeth Bradley argues that since we don't teach children how to drive a car safely when they are drunk, then we shouldn't teach them how to practice safer sex. Too bad she used the wrong analogy. We do tell our students not to drink. We teach them that drinking has many negative health consequences and that it is illegal. But we know that teenagers do drink, so we also tell them that if they drink they should protect themselves and others and have a designated driver.

The "Just say no!" approach to drug education didn't work. It hasn't worked with sex education either. We know that honest and frank discussions with teens about the risks of sexual behavior help delay sexual activity. Isn't that what health education is about, giving students tools and information so they can make the healthiest choices for themselves? By using Ms. Bradley's approach to sex education we are not raising standards, we are short-changing our students' education.

Peter Ryersbach
Middlebury, Vermont

HEALTH COVERAGE

It was with great concern that I read Adrienne Coles' article "Healthy Students Learn Best" in the February issue. All of us in the classroom have seen students who do not receive the necessary medical care they deserve because their parents' or guardians' employers do not provide medical coverage for dependent children. This is a problem that needs attention.

But, another problem of equal importance is the plight of the thousands of teachers hired on a part-time or substitute basis who do not receive medical or dental coverage through their school districts. School districts are saving countless dollars by employing teachers part time to avoid paying for benefits. All teachers and school personnel need affordable health insurance, along with our students. We need to be healthy as well.

Kelly A. Johnson
White Bear Lake Township, Minnesota

WORLD CONNECTIONS

In the article "What's in a Soccer Ball?" (My Turn, February), Bill Bigelow states "we learned facts,

but acquired no insight" to describe a world geography class where students did not learn about their connection to world issues.

During my 36 years teaching world geography, history, economics, sociology, psychology, and government, my students learned about current events every day and connected "world happenings" with the factual items that I expected all of them to learn and to comprehend.

Bravo to Bigelow and teachers like him.

Kurt Permann
Redfield, South Dakota

SAVING FOR RETIREMENT

Thank you for your recent double-page spread on retirement problems, especially for the portion on the Windfall Elimination Provision (WEP) and the Government Pension Offset (GPO) (Inside Scoop, February). Those of us who have been fighting for the elimination of these unfair laws are very heartened by the increasing amount of public awareness concerning the GPO and WEP.

Legislation will be reintroduced this spring by Congressman Buck McKeon and Senator Dianne Feinstein (companion bills) that will eliminate the GPO and WEP. Everyone, not just those in states directly affected by these laws, should write to their congressional delegation to urge support for these bills.

The Social Security Offsets affect people in every state, from retired teachers to firefighters, police officers, and the health care workers in state care facilities. The laws are unfair and discriminatory, and their elimination is affordable, necessary, and right.

Sue Shaw
Penobscot, Maine

My monthly Social Security benefit checks will be only half of what I was promised and my wife will get nothing when I die because of the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision.

I still meet teachers who are unaware of the provisions. We are being penalized because we worked for the public schools. We need to eliminate the Government Pension Offset and the Windfall Elimination Provision.

Larry Dashiell
Colorado Springs, Colorado

I was so upset to learn that as a resident of the state of Georgia I would not be able to collect the Social Security benefits that I have paid into all these years simply because I have a retirement plan with the state. Either way, it still is money taken from my paycheck every pay period and I feel this is unfair to every citizen who has a state-funded job.

After speaking with many present and former co-workers, we feel that either our retirement money or the Social Security money we've paid should be returned to us now since we will not be allowed to receive both at retirement age.

Ava Rivers
Macon, Georgia

There is more the NEA can do to help retired teachers with inadequate pension benefits besides working to eliminate the GPO and WEP. The NEA should fight to eliminate across-the-board increases in pension benefits that give the same percentage increase to individuals receiving large and small pensions alike. This widens the gap between rich and poor. It's regressive when it's done with salary schedules and worse when done with pensions.

Individuals who retired many years ago should receive a greater increase in their pension benefits than those who retired recently and already receive more than older retirees. We should lobby state legislatures to eliminate "windfalls" for retirees at the top of the pension scale and provide a progressive distribution to those at the bottom.

The amount an individual contributed to the retirement system during his or her teaching years is irrelevant to any increases the legislature appropriates after that teacher has retired.

Fred Smith
North Riverside, Illinois

SUPPORTING TEACHERS

I am saddened that "Truth in Labeling" (January cover story) and related articles called for yet more responsibilities for the classroom teacher.

None of your articles addressed the sad reality that support for educators who wish to enforce consequences for students' bad behavior or a lack of effort is rapidly becoming extinct. We don't need *NEA Today* to be part of the chorus of those who expect us to do it all.

Jonathan J. Frank
San Francisco, California

Let's Talk

Share your ideas, comments, and opinions with *NEA Today* in one of four ways:

- By mail: Write to Letters, *NEA Today*, 1201 16th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
- Through the Web: Go to www.nea.org/neatoday, click on "Reader Services," and fill in the "Letter to the Editor" section.
- By e-mail: Write to neatoday@nea.org
- By fax: 202/822-7206

Letters are edited for length and clarity.

President's Viewpoint

BY REG WEAVER

Educators Unite!

ESEA and budget cuts are an assault on our professional integrity and our livelihoods.

"A time comes," Martin Luther King Jr., once said, "when your silence won't protect you."

Well, for teachers and education support professionals that time is now.

A new federal education law that combines worthy goals with fundamentally flawed implementation has merged with the worst state budget crises in more than 30 years to create a "perfect storm" for educators.

At the same time that the federal government is requiring improved student performance on standardized tests, our class sizes are ballooning, our qualifications for a highly qualified teacher and professional development have been reduced, and school funding and construction to accommodate the growing number of students is being put on hold.

If we are to survive this storm with our professional integrity intact and our jobs secure, we are going to have to strategize, organize, and mobilize like we have never done before. What's more, we must re-energize ourselves as we recruit new members who are committed to our profession, children, students, and public education.

"We must help teachers and ESPs channel their anger and frustration in a manner that will support our plight in this fight."

We must champion the goals that we have long advocated—many of which are embodied in the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)—while fighting to change how those goals are implemented. And to this fight, we must bring a passion, an intensity, and a high level of member participation that is unrivaled.

Under ESEA, as it is currently crafted, your best efforts in the classroom, and your students and school, can be judged a failure—based on a single number on one of either two tests.

Under ESEA, if the students in your school do not score higher on the standardized tests every year for four straight years, you could face serious consequences.

Under ESEA, your school's lack of resources will not prevent *you* from being labeled a failure.

Under ESEA, successful, experienced teachers will have to demonstrate their subject matter competency, either by passing a test or by meeting a "high objective uniform statewide standard of evaluation."

I have yet to meet a professional educator who is not angered once he or she learns about the fine print in ESEA. We must help teachers and ESPs channel their anger and frustration in a manner that will support our plight in this fight.

The fight to change ESEA and stop the budget cuts will not be won by a handful of skilled association lobbyists and spokespeople. It will be won by NEA members, teachers, ESPs, parents, and others demanding that their elected representatives listen attentively and amend this law—for the sake our students, our schools, and our profession. It will be won by writing letters and e-mails, by sending faxes, and by using our united voices. It will be won by each one of us exercising our rights and responsibilities as citizens in the world's longest-running democracy.

It will take a groundswell of democracy to amend ESEA and secure adequate resources for our schools. Are we up to the task?

Yes, we are!

Comments? E-mail Reg Weaver at RegWeaver@nea.org.

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Making Public Schools Great for Every Child

Can you give your students a new perspective on learning?

It's been quite a ride for the eighth-graders at O'Leary Junior High in Twin Falls, Idaho. Their teachers created a roller coaster design project that combines math, science and language arts learning in a relevant and intriguing way. Intel's education web site features an array of professional development programs created to help engage your students—not to mention the resources needed to extend their learning beyond the classroom. To find out more about these exciting and free resources,

visit intel.com/education.

Intel® Teach to the Future offers free professional development on effectively integrating technology into your classroom.

The Seeing Reason web site includes an interactive tool designed to help your students better understand complex cause-and-effect relationships.

Yes.

intel®
innovation in education

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Honoring Space Heroes

A teacher and her students give a nod to those who look for answers beyond the stars.

BY VERONIQUE PAQUETTE

Dear families of the astronauts,

When my mom woke me up and told me about the terrible news about the rocket ship that exploded, I felt sad and sorry. I just wanted to cry! Your family member was very brave to go to outer space like that! Thanks to them we will always be learning new fun things about outer space!

Your friend,
Rachel Mahre

Photos by Kelly Gillin

Veronique Paquette supervises a student at the annual "Space Shuttle Simulation Day" she helps organize at her school.

These words were written by one of my second-grade students on the Monday after the *Columbia* shuttle explosion rocked the space exploration world. Not only did this tragedy shake NASA to its core, it opened a hole in my own heart—and the hearts of my students. NASA was particularly dear to me, and in many ways, I felt a part of its family and so shared my enthusiasm with those around me.

During the summer of 2000 I spent two weeks at a NASA "Space Camp," working with teachers from around the country to learn about the power of the space program. As a guest of the Ames Research Center in California, I spent my days with scientists, researchers, and astronauts who schooled me on the latest in research and science that NASA had to offer.

For me this was a dream come true. I'd always had a love of space and the stars. As a little girl, I remember looking for constellations with my dad and brother on summer nights, watching satellites fly overhead and having contests to see who could spot the most flying objects in the sky. As a student, science never came easily for me, but the love of wanting to understand the world I lived in kept driving me to learn more.

As a teacher I quickly discovered that all children have this same desire to understand their world. They may not grasp complex concepts, but they have that wonderful ability to ask "why?" So, too, do adults. Indeed, at NASA, I found that the scientists and researchers who work daily to explore uncharted territory are motivated by the very question that has fueled my own passion: "What more can there possibly be beyond my world?" The risk associated with space travel does not consume them; they simply go forward for the sake of science and education.

Sitting on the plane on the way home from that great experience, I kept thinking about the endless possibilities opened up by my training. NASA was instilled in my head and in my heart, and I wanted to share its good works with everyone I knew, especially my students. So back at school, I launched what we now call our "Space Shuttle Simulation Day." Every year students bound into the gym, don suits, and work and cooperate—even train—just as real astronauts do.

At one station, for instance, they are forced to shift their center of gravity by sitting on a small rolling cart, hands and feet off the ground, to perform tasks such as removing nuts and bolts from a wall. At another station, they pretend they're on the surface of the moon and use toy moon grabbers to gather lunar samples (lumps of dried clay imbedded with colored beads), then chart and graph their results. Later, at "mission control," they sit at laptop computers with NASA-supplied software that simulates a rocket liftoff and the surface of the moon.

I have loved sharing experiences like this with my students. When John Glenn made an encore in space as a senior citizen, we waited together all morning to witness the liftoff. After I met teacher astronaut Barbara Morgan in Houston at the International Space Station Educator's Conference, my students heard all about it and hung on to my every word. The same was true after I met former astronaut Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin; I was a celebrity in my own classroom!

It was understandable, then, that when *Columbia* came to its tragic end, my students and I were devastated. Nearly paralyzed from watching news reports nonstop, I had great difficulty discussing the issues with them, but knew it was something I had to do.

What astounded me was the compassion and depth of understanding my students showed. They fully understood the risks the astronauts took and understood even more the loss the families sustained. But remarkably, not one of my students felt NASA should stop their missions. The very future of science, they agreed, would be at stake.

I was deeply moved by the letters all my students would later write to the families, and I hope the families found solace in them. But I hope more that at least one of my students will go on to continue the dreams and desires of the brave heroes who lost their lives.

I would look at it, fondly, as my personal contribution to the spectacular future of science and space. ✔

Veronique Paquette is a second-grade teacher at Kenroy Elementary School in Wenatchee, Washington. She is also this year's Washington State Teacher of the Year.

It's possible you've seen their names, but only if you read the fine print on the bottom of page 2.

There you'll find the members who are part of the *NEA Today* Local Editor Advisory Board. Since 1996, the eight-person Advisory Board, whose members have changed over the years, has been helping *NEA Today* staff to fine-tune the publication to make it more engaging and useful for NEA members.

Bill Fischer
editor

Panel members are teachers and paraprofessionals, working at large high schools, middle and elementary schools. They hail from diverse communities across the country: from deep in the heart in El Paso, Texas, to the coasts in Los Angeles and Newcastle, Delaware, from big cities, suburbs, and rural areas.

One of the group's tasks is to critique each issue of *NEA Today*. Panel members (who receive their issues ahead of the regular membership) are asked to evaluate each issue using a series of questions.

For example, which stories moved you to action? What did you like best or least about the issue? Did the cover attract your attention? How could it have been better?

The advisory panel members frequently poll other members at their schools and highlight this feedback for NEA writers and editors. Once a year panel members come to NEA headquarters to offer first-hand opinions and preferences to *NEA Today* staff.

This year, eight local editors came to Washington in late February for a day and a half of meetings that kicked off a week of *NEA Today* story planning for next year. Besides offering story suggestions, the local editors also had a chance to meet with NEA President Reg Weaver who responded to their questions and concerns and those of their colleagues back home.

Bill Fischer

Are You Ready?

Not so long ago, if you knew how to word process your reports, file grades electronically, and pull together a Microsoft® PowerPoint® presentation, you were tech-savvy—or at least tech-adequate. Yet, these skills didn't really affect the way you taught. Now educators are looking at the range of technology available and integrating it into their teaching—using technology as a tool to facilitate learning, just as the blackboard did generations ago.

And in today's classrooms, educational technology encompasses much more than desktop computers. Teachers have access to laptops and pocket PCs, digital cameras and microscopes, Web-based video equipment, graphing calculators, and even weather-tracking devices.

It's a good thing, since new laws require teachers to show greater ability to integrate technology into their lessons.

Students have high-tech expectations for their teachers as well. For students, technology has become a part of their everyday existence, and they've come to expect the same from their educational environment.

For Nebraska fifth-grade teacher Tony Vincent, technology has become as commonplace as textbooks and chalk.

Every student in Vincent's classroom at Willowdale Elementary School in Omaha has a personal handheld computer—pocket-sized computers that look more like Nintendo® Game Boys than education tools. But under the guidance of their teacher, students use the portable devices to compose and edit essays for language arts, diagram the parts of a cell for science, complete a spelling quiz their teacher "beams" to them, and even animate long division problems.

Animate long division problems?

Using a computer program called Sketchy, which functions like a digital flip book, students create short cartoons that show each step they take to solve a math problem. They move the numbers around the screen as they solve a problem and add "thought bubbles" to explain their work. Students find the programs so engaging they watch their cartoons, and ones created by their classmates, repeatedly. The process of creating the product and reviewing it reinforces the thought process students should use to solve the problems, Vincent says. As a result, a lesson that used to take two weeks now takes just three days for students to comprehend.

Having the handheld computers in class gives students immediate and regular access to the technology. And Vincent no longer has to structure his lessons around the availability of the school's computer lab. As a result, students spend more time composing and revising projects, collaborating on group assignments, and building their problem-solving skills. Students even take the small portable computers home to complete assignments.

"Now that I've had a taste of the classroom that I've always imagined, where students each have their own computer and collaborate and work together, I can't imagine teaching without them," Vincent says.

But teaching without technology is no longer an option for any teacher under new federal and state requirements.

States Setting Technology Requirements

While previous federal educational technology programs focused more on increasing student access to technology, the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) includes provisions about how teachers and students use it. The technology component of the law,

Life on Planet 5th

Omaha teacher takes on technology.

Nebraska teacher Tony Vincent (top row) and fifth-grader Katie Garth (bottom rows) share a typical day in Vincent's classroom at Willowdale Elementary School in Omaha. Vincent and his students created the following photo essays to show how he incorporates handheld computers into his lessons and how his students use them during class activities. For more photos, visit Vincent's class website, Planet 5th, at www.mpsomaha.org/willow/p5/handhelds/.

I start the morning transfer of student work from their handhelds to the desktop computer. The fifth graders know the routine and finish the process for me.

This morning I take some time to create a Quizzler quiz with vocabulary words. I'll beam this quiz to students later today.

I enter the fifth-grade area and Mr. Vincent greets me.

After syncing, I eagerly read the news and check our class website, Planet 5th, on the Palm™ handheld's Web browser, AvantGo. I can win prizes from Mr. Vincent by answering questions I find on Planet 5th.

I have extra time, so I quiz myself on vocabulary words using Quizzler. Mr. Vincent beamed us a quiz that he created. He has taught us how to program our own quizzes, too.

I transfer my homework from my handheld to the desktop computer using HotSync® software if Mr. Vincent has not already done so. It takes a little over a minute to "hot sync."

Photos by Jess McCleery and Tony Vincent

High-tech teaching—students latch on to it, the law will require it, and educators are taking it beyond the computer lab.

known as the Enhancing Education Through Technology (Ed-Tech) initiative, focuses on three goals:

- improving student academic achievement through the use of technology,
- assisting students in becoming technologically literate by the time they finish eighth grade, and
- ensuring that teachers can integrate technology into the curriculum.

Under the federal law, states must develop technology plans that include strategies for accomplishing these goals. The requirements have given many states an incentive to re-evaluate the role technology plays in their classrooms, says Lynn Nolan, director of professional development services for the International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE).

ESEA "is motivating people," Nolan says. "[States] need to show improvement in the content areas. They need to show eighth-grade technology literacy and teacher proficiency with technology. So the emphasis is on technology integration because it meets several needs."

Increasingly, states require teachers to demonstrate their technology proficiency for licensure and certification. Idaho, North Dakota, Rhode Island, and Virginia, for example, require some form of computer literacy from candidates seeking a state license. South Carolina expects teachers to obtain graduate credit in instructional technology for recertification. And states such as Hawaii, Kansas, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, and Texas expect their teacher education programs to equip future educators with essential technology skills.

Paul Hartmann

NEA Student Program member Lindsey Desmond tutors fourth grader Champrea Frye as part of her elementary education studies.

Most often, states refer to ISTE's National Educational Technology Standards, a set of standards outlining core technology competencies that students, teachers, and administrators should meet.

So far, 32 states have adopted, adapted, or otherwise referenced the National Educational Technology Standards for teachers in their state technology plans or other state education documents. Many tie these standards to their licensure and recertification requirements.

Some states require students to meet certain technology standards as well, which means teachers need those high-tech skills to prepare their students. Twenty-five states have incorporated the National Educational Technology Standards for students into their curriculum or technology plans. Some, like Virginia, test students or require them to demonstrate their skills.

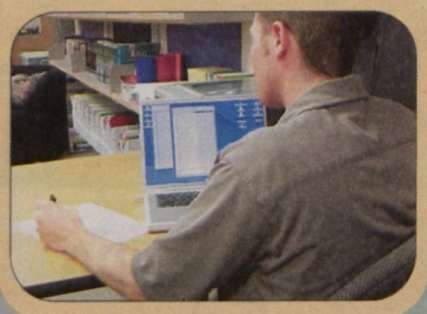
I pause for our class Roving Reporter to take my picture. The Roving Reporter is a different student each day who takes pictures and writes an article about our activities for the day.

The class is composing essays. To revise and edit essays we often choose a partner to help. We exchange handhelds, read each others' essays, and discuss our suggestions.

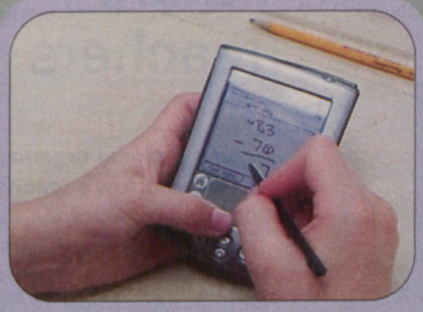
After attendance, students get to work on their spelling. The class Roving Reporter hands me his grading rubric and a print-out of his article.

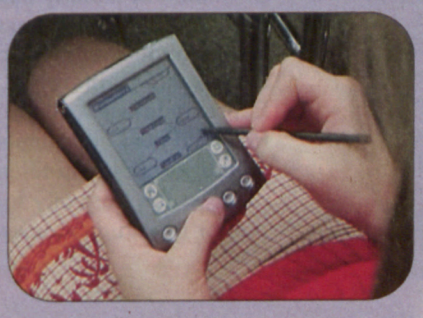
During reading, I use WordSmith to record my thoughts as I read my book. I attach my keyboard to the Palm because I have a lot of typing to do in my journal. My journal is safely stored in the Palm.

I grade his Roving Reporter article, then connect to his document folder on the iMac®. I find the photos and article he completed and combine them into our website.

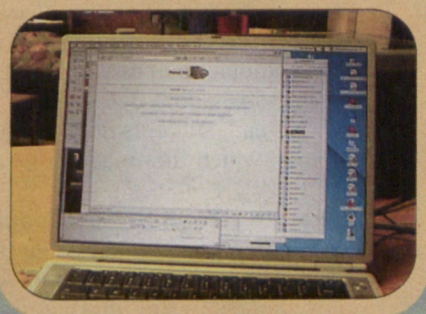


In math (top) we use BeSmart to add and subtract positive and negative numbers. In social studies (above) I organize and connect vocabulary words from the Industrial Revolution.





I copy and paste news, information, literature, and fun math problems onto the class website. Students can download the information to their handhelds in the morning.



Sadly, it is the end of the day. I turn in my handheld at the table at the back of the room. Later, Mr. Vincent will lock up all the handhelds overnight.

Photos by Paul Hartmann

Above: Karen Walker learns about teaching with technology. Right: Walker shows second grader Daser Ibrahim how to use a digital microscope with a computer.

But even as states establish additional technology requirements for students and teachers, many K-12 schools still struggle to incorporate technology effectively into their curriculum.

"One of the big myths out there is that students have good access to computers and high technology. That's not really true," says Randy Bell, professor of science education at the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville. "Most computers are in labs, not in classrooms. So even if a teacher has the inclination and ability to do creative things with computers, he or she doesn't have good access."

Despite the fact that the average school now has more than 100 computers, the average student gets only 20 minutes of computer time each week, according to researchers at Curry. Consequently, when teachers do use computers with their students, they focus on business applications, such as word processing, or searching the Web for reference information, Bell says.

Instead, students need regular, spur-of-the-moment access to technology, which they may not be able to get.

Creating Tech-Savvy Teachers

But access alone won't solve the problem. Although 99 percent of schools have access to the Internet, only about one-third of current teachers describe themselves as "well-prepared" or "very well-prepared" to use computers or the Internet for instruction, according to the Center for Education Statistics.

At the same time, students use computers and surf the Web more and more on their own. Consequently, many develop skills and a comfort with technology that surpasses their teachers' abilities. A survey by the Pew Internet and American Life Project found that more than 78 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds go online, often for help on their schoolwork. Those same Internet-savvy students, though, say their in-school exposure to technology is not as engaging. So teachers need the skills to develop interesting and relevant technology-based lessons if they want to keep their students' attention—or just keep up.

"Professional development is the key," says Nolan of ISTE. "It's no longer about professional development on basic computing skills, but more professional development on technology integration."

Tony Vincent, in Nebraska, agrees. When Vincent began using handheld computers in his classroom two years ago, he found few resources to help him develop effective teaching strategies with the palm-size computers. So, Vincent researched software programs and tried different activities on his own. Since then, other educators have turned to Vincent for guidance on using the pocket PCs. He posts information and resources on his class website and even teaches a graduate class about teaching with handheld computers.

Under ESEA, states must document the strategies they plan to use to prepare educators to teach with technology. The law also designates some funding for professional development. Through ESEA's Ed-Tech initiative, states receive federal education technology grants based on the amount of Title I funding they receive. While states and school districts can use the funds for several purposes, including purchasing equipment, recipients must use at least 25 percent of the grant funds for professional development. The program includes formula-based and competitive grants.

Tomorrow's Teachers

While school districts are training in-service educators to teach with technology, teacher education programs are preparing future teachers to work with more than word processing programs.

At the Curry School of Education, preservice teachers begin their instruction with a basic technology course that covers how to use programs such

Helping Future Teachers

The NEA Student Program, the largest preprofessional organization for future educators, helps tomorrow's teachers prepare for the rewards and challenges of the classroom. The program serves 50,000 members on more than 900 college campuses. Benefits of membership include the annual publication *Tomorrow's Teachers* and $1 million of liability insurance. Each year, the Student Program sponsors Connections, a fall professional development conference, and the Student Leadership Conference, which precedes NEA's Representative Assembly (RA). The Student Program also coordinates Outreach to Teach, an annual school beautification project that takes place in the host city for the RA. For more information or to join, visit www.nea.org/student-program/.

as PowerPoint. But they then progress to a course on educational technology where they develop technology-based lessons.

In addition, professors use technology and model effective teaching strategies in each of the content area methods classes. Some professors also require preservice teachers to incorporate technology-based lessons into their student teaching or other field experiences.

For instance, elementary education majors participate in a computer tutoring program at a local school—they teach the children about webpage design and PowerPoint. Students enrolled in the secondary math education program partner with a local school teacher to integrate technology into the teacher's curriculum.

The program encourages preservice teachers to use technology to enhance learning and discourages them from using it simply to attract students' attention.

"They want us to use technology in an effective way," says Karen Walker, an NEA Student Program member enrolled in Curry's two-year postgraduate master's of teaching program, "because if the students are just watching images on a screen, then they might as well be watching television."

Peabody College at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, takes a similar approach. All education students complete an introductory educational technology course, where students learn how to incorporate instructional software into lessons. Students also develop their own websites and electronic portfolios.

The school integrates technology into the methods classes as well. In the reading methods class, for example, students work with Web-based video case studies as part of their curriculum. Meanwhile, students in an educational psychology class use weekly Web-based discussions to ponder the ways technology impacts student learning.

The University of San Diego in California has partnered with the Chula Vista Elementary School District to offer preservice teachers a weekly "multimedia academy." Staff from a local elementary school and former student teachers show the college students how to work with a variety of media, including scanners, laserdiscs, the Internet, music CDs, graphics, clip art, and video systems, in an education setting. When preservice teachers begin their own student teaching assignments, they conduct a multimedia project with students from the school district.

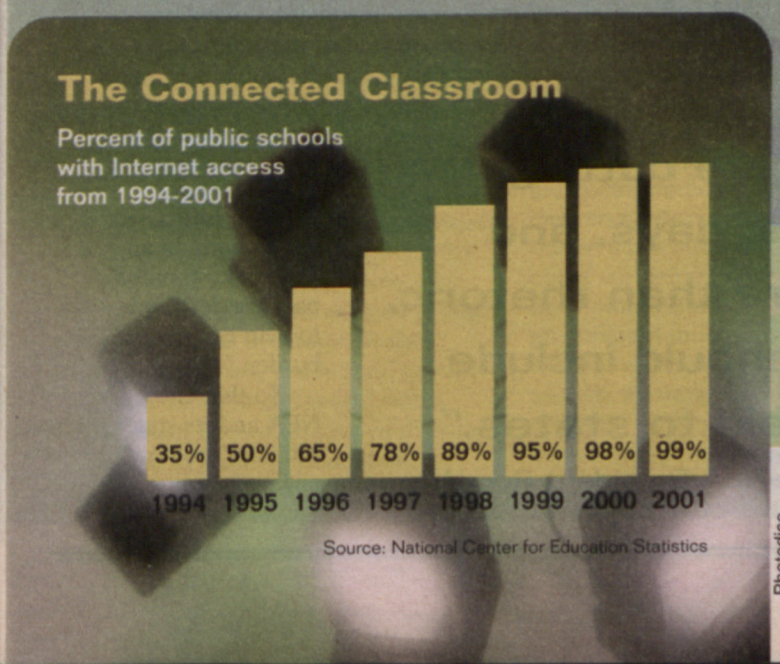
Teachers Still at the Head of the Class

While technology has advanced to a stage where it can truly enhance a teacher's ability to teach, in the end, it remains just a tool. The teacher remains the key to conveying information to students.

"I'm not a believer in using the technology or a gadget just because it's there," says Vincent in Nebraska. "I think you should use the best tool and sometimes the handheld computer is the best tool, but sometimes paper and pencil and manipulatives are the best way to get the job done.

"I'm all about the teaching. The technology is definitely cool, but the teaching comes first." ✔

—Kristen Loschert



Photodisc

Teaching with Technology

Are you looking for ways to integrate technology into your curriculum, but don't know where to start? Check out how these educators use technology with their students.

Elaine Insinnia, an eighth-grade language arts teacher from Berkeley Heights, New Jersey, uses Internet research to help her students understand the novels they read for class. Using leading questions, Insinnia directs students as they research a book's author, time period of the story, and key historical events related to the plot. Insinnia and her students used to conduct similar research in the school's library, which often took several class periods. With the Internet, "you can get the same amount of information in 25 to 30 minutes," she says. "It saves you lots of time and the kids pay attention."

The project lets students take control of their learning as they explore websites and information that interests them, Insinnia says. The project also teaches students how to evaluate the validity of information they find on the Web.

After they complete their research, students share their findings in an online chat room. "When you are in a classroom discussion, the same kids dominate the discussion," Insinnia says. "In the chat room everyone gets a chance to answer and they are engaged."

The chat room discussion also provides a record of each student's contribution, which Insinnia can review later, she adds.

Dan Phelon, a technology support teacher in Windsor, Connecticut, worked with his district's math coordinator to develop an Internet-based probability project called Heads Up. During the project, students predict the number of times a penny will land heads-side up during a short series of flips. To provide students with additional experimental data, Phelon created an automated website where schools across the country could register to participate in the project. On a designated day, students in each participating classroom flip a penny 100 times and record the number of times the coin lands heads- and tails-side up. Students then submit their findings through the website, which other classrooms can access to analyze the data. By evaluating a larger sampling of results, students see that although flipping a head and flipping a tail are equally likely, in experimental trials the results may differ.

Sixth-grade teachers **Leo Lyvers and Debra Teets** used a Web camera and net-conferencing software to team teach a language arts lesson last year. The two Kentucky teachers had their students read the same short story. Then the students participated in a joint class discussion over the Internet. The students took turns standing in front of the Web camera asking and answering questions about the book. The technology allowed the classes to see each other on monitors and communicate in real time, even though the two schools were several miles apart. In addition, using the technology encouraged students to participate in the discussion.

"It was a great learning experience for them because they all really enjoyed it," says Lyvers, who now teaches sixth-grade social studies and science. "The students were eager to get in front of the camera and ask or answer a question."

Want more ideas? Visit the Gateway to Educational Materials (GEM) at www.thegateway.org/. GEM offers one-stop access to high-quality lesson plans, curriculum units, and other education resources available on the Internet. The site includes education resources from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, NASA, UNICEF, numerous universities, and other organizations. You also can find lesson plans based on ISTE's National Educational Technology Standards (NETS) at http://cnets.iste.org/search/s_search.html.

'We're Desperate and Looking for Help!'

As state budget woes increase, NEA and its state affiliates lobby for $50 billion in direct fiscal relief from Washington.

Missouri NEA members have had every reason to feel secure about school funding during this, the worst round of budget deficits to hit states since World War II.

The governor these teachers and support professionals helped elect, public education advocate Bob Holden, has shielded schools while trimming other state expenditures.

But the Show-Me State is headed for a fiscal showdown. Missouri doesn't have the $300 million it needs to pay all of its public education bills by June 30, and it faces a general revenue shortfall of $1 billion in Fiscal Year 2004.

After Governor Holden rakes up some short-term "revenue enhancements" and "cuts almost every social program to the bone, there will be *nothing left to cut,*" shudders Missouri NEA President Greg Jung. "Education will have to be next—we're desperate and looking for help!"

Many other NEA state affiliates face a similar dilemma. In the latest survey conducted by the National Council of State Legislatures (NCSL), two-thirds of the states reported that they must reduce their budgets by a total of $26 billion between now and June 30 (the end of Fiscal Year 2003 in most states). And NCSL expects state legislatures to face a total budget shortfall of at least $68.5 billion in FY 2004.

There's more behind these mounting deficits than an economic downturn, sinking stock prices, homeland security demands, and soaring public health care costs. AFL-CIO economists report that federal tax changes in 2001 and 2002 "negatively affected states' bottom line, as most states link their estate tax and bonus depreciation rules to the federal rules, both of which have been changed to reduce taxes."

Ron Blalock

And NCSL expects yet more fiscal pain linked to federal policy. NCSL President Angela Monson, a state senator from Oklahoma, says that state budget planners are concerned that President Bush's proposed FY 2004 federal budget "does not meet the costs of mandates for the No Child Left Behind Act, special education, and election reform."

Needed: 'Unrestricted Federal Relief'

Worse yet, this spending plan, described by the Bush administration as an "economic growth and job creation" package, would provide no money for state and local governmental fiscal relief—while freezing, reducing, or eliminating funding for a broad array of federal education programs (compared with FY 2002 levels). The plan would, however, allocate $75 million for a private voucher "demonstration" program.

Among tax changes in the proposed budget is a provision exempting stock dividends from individual taxation. In a preliminary analysis, the nonprofit, non-partisan Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (www.cbpp.org) projects that this provision would mean an annual revenue loss of $4.1 billion for the 37 states (and the District of Columbia) that link their tax systems to the federal taxation of dividends.

And, if enacted, the dividend "exclusion" provision could force school districts to boost interest rates on tax-free construction/renovation bonds to make them competitive with tax-free stock dividends.

"There is no question" that this plan would cost states more and drive investors "away from bonds that broadly benefit the public at a time that we have enormous infrastructure needs," California state Treasurer Phil Angelides told the *New York Times.*

"States and local districts are already struggling with budget shortfalls, forcing them to cut back on school hours, school days, and school programs," says NEA President Reg Weaver. "It will be impossible for them to meet new federal mandates with a new round of program cuts and freezes.

"To be more than rhetoric, this federal budget should include direct, unrestricted aid to states in an economic stimulus package designed to help ease this burden."

To that end, NEA and its state affiliates are now engaged in an

"States and districts are cutting back on school hours, days, and programs. To be more than rhetoric, this federal budget should include direct, unrestricted aid to states."

—NEA President Reg Weaver

intensive, coordinated campaign to lobby for $50 billion in federal relief to the states in the FY 2004 budget, a sum that's right in the ballpark of other "fiscal recovery" plans—both Democratic and bipartisan—now pending in Congress.

"We need to make noise with members of Congress and get them to understand this is a high priority," stresses NEA Executive Director John Wilson. "If they could bail out the savings and loan industry they could do the same for state and local governments. It would stimulate the economy and be a win-win situation for everyone." ✔

—Dave Winans

For more on NEA's lobbying priorities in the 108th Congress, go to www.nea.org and click on "Legislative Action Center."

Big Arguments for a Bigger Federal Outlay for Education

As Congress labors to write a Fiscal Year 2004 budget resolution by early spring, NEA and its state affiliates will be working equally hard to ensure that this document includes $50 billion in desperately needed federal aid to the states.

With NEA assistance, state affiliate leaders and staff will be lobbying members of Congress, meeting governors, urging state legislators to pass resolutions supporting federal aid, and educating the public on the funding crisis that has engulfed public education.

Among the arguments state and local officials can expect to hear from educators:

■ **The crisis in public education funding is real.** "In 'back-home' meetings with educators, members of Congress need to see how budget shortfalls affect their states and districts," says Missouri NEA President Greg Jung, a fifth-grade teacher from the Ritenour district. "Teachers lose jobs, students are packed into classrooms, programs are cut, and social services disappear."

■ **Congress must fund its own mandates.** "In Missouri, much of the money to fund special education programs comes from the state and local districts. The federal government never lived up to its promise to pay a 40 percent share," Jung points out. "And now our state, which cut back funding for student testing, must 'fill in' math testing gaps in our current assessments to meet the mandates of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

"President Bush wholeheartedly supported ESEA, but his budget doesn't support the programs for which he advocated," Jung adds.

■ **Federal aid makes a big difference in tough times.** "Unlike states, the federal government can deficit-spend," notes Michael Butera, executive director of the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC). "The federal government has the power and fiscal capacity to help states put their economic house in order.

"Remember, the airline industry was decimated after September 11 and, within weeks, the federal government created a program with a large cash layout to help carriers come out of the doldrums," Butera points out. Now states are facing similar circumstances."

■ **There are fiscal *priorities.*** In his budget, President Bush proposes $1.5 trillion in tax cuts over the next 10 years. Just 3 percent of that amount would help states prevent cuts in education and health care services.

Jung reminds the Bush administration that "just like at mealtime at home, the federal government must set priorities. You've got to feed the kids and take care of basics before you buy a new car."

■ **There's no better time to invest in education.** It's bad policy to disinvest in public schools at a time when the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics is projecting a shortage of 10 million, well-trained, skilled workers by 2010.

"States need the money to invest in [pre-K to graduate education] to grow the economy and come out of the downturn," says Butera. "It's not a matter alone of dollars for education. It's also about job creation and economic development."

■ **The health care system must be fixed.** The soaring cost of health coverage and the upsurge in numbers of uninsured Americans—now at 41 million—means that public/employee health care competes directly with education in state budgets. "Health care costs are rising faster than education," notes Butera. "The federal government must rethink its Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement formula to states and must focus attention on the nationwide problem of rising health costs."

—D.W.

[YOUR DUES DID IT]

NEA Releases Study on Property Tax Handouts

While public education's tin cup gets federal aid by the drip, its bottom leaks property tax revenue in streams to property tax abatements or "tax increment financing" schemes (TIFs) granted to corporations in all 50 states. And few local school boards have any real say in this decision, often made behind closed doors.

That's the conclusion of *Protecting Public Education From Tax Giveaways to Corporations,* a 50-state study commissioned by NEA and released to the national media at a January press conference.

Researchers analyzed state statutes, surveyed state school board association officials, and looked in-depth at five states. The final report concludes that only two states shield public school funding from property tax abatements and TIFs—defined as "an exemption of the value of real property improvements" over a set number of years—and that just two states give school boards full input into decisions about these subsidies.

Respondents in 32 states reported that one or both of these tax gimmicks divert funding from their public schools. But it was impossible to determine an exact sum, because many states don't have adequate corporate disclosure requirements—making it difficult to monitor property tax breaks made in the name of "economic development."

But at NEA's press conference, school board member Sharon Patchak-Layman of Illinois District 97, Oak Park, could put an exact dollar amount on school funding lost to a TIF. She reported that "we're facing a $3 million shortfall this year" and pointed out that repeal of the TIF "would give us $1.7 million in additional resources."

And Ohio Education Association Research Director Fritz Fekete told reporters that Ohio lost $102 million to tax abatements and TIFs in 1999, and has lost "an increasing amount since then—even though our state is in the midst of a school funding crisis."

The NEA study, carried out by Good Jobs First—a nonpartisan, nonprofit corporate accountability project—calls for improved disclosure of tax subsidies, a "formal say" for school boards in subsidy decisions, and state government action to protect school revenues from the effects of tax abatements and TIFs.

The report stresses that the local supply of skilled labor is increasingly rated as the top factor in business relocation or expansion decisions, not tax breaks. "We believe abatement programs can have merit, but not when they choke off funding that is the key to economic development—local public schools," Illinois Education Association-NEA President Anne Davis told a wire service after the press conference.

"Good public schools attract corporations and are essential in the economic development of communities," agreed NEA President Reg Weaver. "This report tells us that our state and local officials need to protect this long-term investment by ensuring that tax incentives are used wisely and responsibly."

"Tax abatements and TIFs may be new to the vocabulary of some educators," Weaver concluded, "but we need to sharpen our knowledge of them—so that we can point out where resources can be found when people ask where additional money can come from to fund public education."

—D.W.

To read NEA's study on tax abatements and TIFs, go to www.nea.org/presscenter/images/protectingpubliceducationfullreport.pdf. And for background on this report, go to www.nea.org/neatoday/0204/news16.html.

Thousands March for Adequate School Funding

Kentucky and Oklahoma NEA members join supporters in rallies for much-needed public education funding.

When it comes to severe weather—and education funding cuts—Oklahoma doesn't just have rainy days, it has tornadoes.

Across the Sooner State, a deep slash in state aid is causing staff layoffs; school closings; spending cuts for programs, substitutes, and supplies; and even wartime-like rationing of building heating and lighting.

But Oklahoma teachers and education support professionals aren't passively waiting for this storm to blow over or contentedly getting by with donated school supplies. Instead they have joined forces with other public education advocates and loudly rallied for adequate state education funding, even in the face of the recession.

On February 12, the Oklahoma Education Association (OEA), joined by more than a dozen organization partners in the Oklahoma Education Coalition, delivered some 25,000 people to a mid-week "Save Our Schools" rally at the Capitol in Oklahoma City.

That same day, the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) drew some 21,000 teachers, ESPs, and supporters to a "March and Rally for Public Education" in Frankfort.

In Oklahoma City, OEA and its coalition partners kept the rally message simple: Education is in its worst crisis ever, and legislators must do whatever it takes to reverse the funding shortfall. "Vital programs and services are already suffering," OEA President Carolyn Crowder told the crowd. "We want to retain the quality programs that Oklahomans have come to expect."

In Frankfort, KEA ralliers called on legislators to sustain the funding needed to preserve achievement gains made under the rigorous Kentucky Education Reform Act. They also called for better pay for teachers and support professionals—to stop an alarming exodus of educators across state lines—and for affordable health insurance.

KEA members also urged lawmakers to prevent an Oklahoma-type tornado from sweeping into the Bluegrass State. "It is the students who suffer most when school districts are forced to cut essential programs and lay off staff to make ends meet," KEA President Frances Steenbergen reminded legislators. "Fewer teachers mean larger classes. And larger classes have a negative affect on student achievement."

Photos by Chas Main

Kentucky NEA members, joined by public education supporters, make their presence felt in Frankfort.

"I've never seen a rally like this down here, period. There is tremendous grassroots support for public education funding, and we need to do everything we can to protect it."

—Kentucky State Treasurer Jonathan Miller

The February 12 rallies grabbed the attention of Kentucky and Oklahoma lawmakers.

"I've never seen a rally like this down here, period," Kentucky State Treasurer Jonathan Miller told the *Cincinnati Enquirer.* "The fact that there is such a huge turnout indicates to me that there is tremendous grassroots support for public education funding, and we need to do everything we can to protect it."

And that same week, Oklahoma Governor Brad Henry and legislative leaders agreed on a supplemental appropriation for immediate school needs, including $25 million from the state's Rainy Day Fund. ✔

—Dave Winans

To see the Oklahoma City rally on video, go to www.nea.org/video.

[KUDOS TO...]

. . . Normandy (Missouri) NEA, for winning court-ordered retroactive compensation and retirement contributions, interest, and penalties—exceeding $1 million—for 300 to 400 current and former certified staffers. The Normandy district, in St. Louis County, failed to implement Missouri's salary compliance law—which requires that certified employees receive a designated portion of a district's budget—during the 1994-95, 1995-96, and 1997-98 school years. Normandy NEA received legal assistance from the 32,000-member Missouri NEA.

. . . Paraeducators in Winooski, Vermont, who have settled a three-year contract that provides a "new money" increase of 24.59 percent. Pay rates under the agreement will range from $8.12 per hour in 2002-03 for a high school graduate with no experience to $12.60 per hour in 2005-06 for a college graduate with 12 years of experience.

The para negotiating team reached this contract without mediation or factfinding. Chief negotiator MaryLee Grigsby reports that Winooski paras enjoy a lot of community support. "We're the core group that passes budgets every year," she says.

Doug Folkes

Oklahoma NEA members join a 25,000-strong "Save Our Schools" rally at the state Capitol organized by the broad-based Oklahoma Education Coalition.

The Oklahoma Rally: What They Did in Durant

THE BACKGROUND: Durant, a stable southeastern Oklahoma community that supports its schools, was slammed hard by state budget cuts this winter. George Washington Elementary was slated for closure; programs were cut; 17 certified staffers and 18 ESPs were slated for a reduction in force (RIF); and money had dried up for everything from school supplies to field trips.

THE CHALLENGE: Durant residents were angry about losing a neighborhood elementary school, and employees on the RIF list—some with 20 or more years of service—were "torn up" and bitter about their plight. "For a lot of my colleagues, teaching has been a way of life, never a job," explains Nancy Johnson, a second-grade teacher at Northwest Elementary and negotiating chair of the 170-member Durant Education Association (DEA).

THE RESPONSE: DEA helped build a local pro-public education coalition of teachers, administrators, and parents—and mobilized to send teachers and administrators to the Oklahoma Education Coalition's February 12 "Save Our Schools" rally in Oklahoma City.

The school board endorsed the idea, authorizing teachers to use a staff development day for the trip. Johnson and DEA President Phyllis Gilbert then joined forces with Superintendent John Jackson, helping him tour schools with an electronic slideshow explaining the need to fight for state aid to education.

THE TRIP UP AND BACK: On February 12, teachers and administrators filled six buses, each fueled through community donations and driven for free by district drivers. Even RIFed teachers climbed on board, hoping to prevent other colleagues from facing the same personal crisis.

On the three-hour trip to Oklahoma City, each bus chose a state-approved professional development activity. "On my bus, we focused on accelerated reading and math," notes Johnson, "and on the way back, we planned ways to absorb staff from George Washington into our school."

A DAY TO REMEMBER: Durant educators, many carrying signs made by parents, drew strength from the crowd of 25,000 ralliers and inspiration from a lunchtime speech by newspaper editor/public education crusader Frosty Troy.

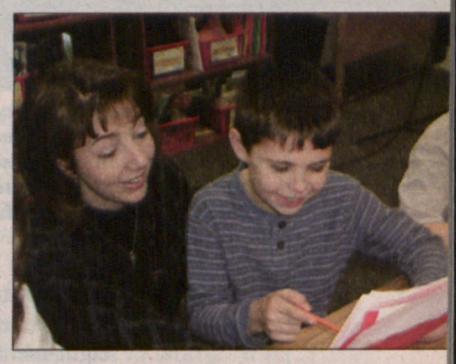
"If we don't stand up and respect ourselves and our profession, who will stand up for us?" Johnson asked herself that day. "They've RIFed teachers and education support professionals—how bad does it have to get?"

AFTER THE RALLY: DEA, a strong "bargaining" local that has negotiated everything from planning time to a duty-free lunch, now faces its biggest advocacy challenge of all—defending the rights of its members at RIF hearings. Fortunately the local has the backing of the Oklahoma Education Association, "which meets individually with these teachers and gets them ready for hearings," notes Johnson. "We're a little bitty local at a real critical point, but OEA is there for us."

KEEPING UP TIES: Throughout this crisis—and beyond—Durant Education Association members are staying in close contact with their state senator and representative and meeting monthly with local coalition partners. One of those partners is David Case, a 20-year military veteran with two kids in Durant schools. "I know about heroes," Case tells Durant teachers, "and you are heroes." ✔

—D.W.

The Kentucky Rally: What They Did in Boyle County



Photos by Chas Main

Kentucky local leaders Bernice Bates, left, and Renee Yates, right, helped turn out educators and community folks at the Frankfort rally.

THE PEOPLE AND THE PLACE: Second-grade teacher Bernice Bates and third-grade teacher Renee Yates, Junction City Elementary, Kentucky.

POSITIONS: Bates is vice president and Yates is president of the 110-member Boyle County Education Association (BCEA).

MOST RECENT ACCOMPLISHMENT: "The Bates and Yates Team" helped turn out front-line educators, administrators, and community supporters from their central Kentucky district for a February 12 "March and Rally for Public Education" at the state Capitol in Frankfort.

INSTANT REPLAY: "We estimate that 150 people from our small district went to the rally," reports Renee Yates. "Of course, that's not too many people, but when you put it together with everybody else at the rally, 21,000 people made a giant difference. We were there to make noise, and I think decision makers heard us, even through their brick walls and up in their tall office buildings. We saw some shades being pulled, but not too many."

A HEARTFELT MESSAGE: "Every Association member had a voice that day," says Bernice Bates, "either through a messenger taking a postcard with their personal message to their senator or representative, or by being there and shouting. As I was separating out postcards, it really got to my heart to read notes from teachers across Kentucky about what education funding means to them."

WHAT FUNDING MEANS IN JUNCTION CITY ELEMENTARY: "We're a Title I school that needs funding for after-school programs to help kids with tutoring and homework," notes Yates. "And we must find a way as teachers to increase students' test scores and close achievement gaps—just like every other school. We need to meet the goals of the No Child Left Behind Act [Elementary and Secondary Education Act] and Kentucky's mandate to have no child scoring under 'proficiency' by the year 2014."

A WORD ABOUT TEACHER DUTIES AND PAY: "In Kentucky schools, everything is decided through site-based councils and committees, from curriculum to textbook adoption," Yates points out. "There are a lot of positive things about the committee structure, but then again there's the time factor—and it's all after school. Yet since about 1994, our pay has not increased in comparison to states around us."

A WORD TO LAWMAKERS: "I told my newly elected state representative that a very informed person makes better decisions," says Bates. "I invited him to come to my classroom, roll up his sleeves, and get ready to 'conference' with the students. I think he and other legislators are going to be floored by what they are asking children to do on state testing—and the accomplishment students are showing. The reading, writing, and testing demands are so much greater than when we went to school."

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS: "Our school board amended the calendar to allow us to attend the rally, and we made it up by working on President's Day," Yates points out. "Some local residents asked why we didn't just send a small delegation of educators. My reply: When I and 21,000 colleagues and supporters are face to face, hand to hand with legislators and the governor during a workday, it makes a better impression than if 2,000 of us go on a Saturday and politicians watch us from home on TV. On February 12, they looked out and saw 21,000 voters, and I think that impacted their decision making." ✔

—D.W.

Cleaning Up Aging Schools

A New Jersey local affiliate resolves building problems through a labor-management health and safety committee.

It's no surprise that New Jerseyans, who have long shared their oxygen with major chemical and pharmaceutical manufacturers, pay extra attention to health and safety matters. The state has passed strong laws guaranteeing safe and healthy public facilities, a worker/community "right to know" about hazardous workplace substances, and the nation's only indoor air quality standards for public schools.

Now educators in East Orange have another powerful tool to clean up airless, crumbling, leaky, and moldy school buildings—their very own colleagues, specifically front-line educators Clarence Osborne, Janet Tisdale, Brian Stokes, and Pat Landon.

Photos by Norman Y. Lono

The East Orange joint committee talks shop. Clockwise, from far right, are Janet Tisdale, Jacqui Greadington, Carmen Restaino, Louis Raymondi, Sal Cammarata, Brian Stokes, Pat Landon, and Clarence Osborne (committee chair). Not pictured: Charles Hutchins.

These NEA members belong to the district's highly effective Health, Safety, and Security Committee (HSSC), an eight-member body—four designated by the East Orange Education Association (EOEA), four by the district—to "discuss and resolve" issues of health, safety, and security in this urban system's 21 aging buildings.

This joint panel, created through the collective bargaining agreement, isn't some toothless "facilities committee." By contract, it must meet five times a year, and its management half—including the district architect and the heads of maintenance and security—is empowered to make binding decisions on the spot.

"Everybody sits down and hears the same issues," says EOEA President Jacqui Greadington, an ex officio member of the committee. "People I would normally have to track down for answers are right there. It's critically important to negotiate language that requires parties who can affect change—not just a powerless custodian—to sit down and negotiate district-wide health and safety policy right at the table."

Nobody dominates this panel—it alternates meeting sites between Association and district offices—and nobody keeps it in the dark. Volunteer EOEA health and safety "watchdogs" at school sites report problems to the committee, and almost monthly, committee members conduct "walkthroughs" of East Orange schools with a checklist to spot immediate hazards such as mold, leaks, and temperature problems.

"We look for obvious and not-so-obvious problems—such as a bookcase that's too high and not anchored to the wall, or a poorly mounted door window that a kid could knock out," notes Greadington. "Then we do follow-up to see that things are fixed."

The committee deals with a "broad umbrella" of concerns, she points out, be it leaky roofs (several were repaired last spring), crisis procedures ("who gets called when something goes down in the district"), or "quality of life" issues such as faulty plumbing or cold buildings.

"Our biggest complaint is inadequate heat," Greadington notes. "We had one teacher who said she had been cold for 30 long years! Because of the work of the HSSC, she's not cold anymore. Often it's a case of a unit not being turned on or properly serviced.

"We want to walk into schools feeling healthy and safe. We'll continue this effort room by room, school by school, until we're done."

—Jacqui Greadington, President, East Orange Education Association

"A lot of people in education get used to being in bad situations so long that they become 'normal.' That has to change," declares Greadington, a member of the NEA Board of Directors. "We want our students and staff to walk into schools feeling healthy and safe. We'll continue this effort room by room, school by school, until we're done." ✔

—Dave Winans

Jacqui Greadington can be reached at eoea@aol.com.

[YOUR DUES DID IT]

UniServ Reps Become Air Quality Experts

It's a tolerant school district that allows a crowd of out-of-state, battle-hardened UniServ staffers to tour one of its schools—during class time—with a federal official, building blueprints, an indoor air quality checklist, and a carbon dioxide detector.

That's just what New Mexico's Rio Rancho district did on February 4 when it hosted 14 UniServ reps from 10 states at Mountain View Middle School. These staffers were in town to attend an NEA Health Information Network/UniServ Cluster training session, which included a full-day class on indoor air quality and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Program.

Mountain View is one of some 10,000 K-12 schools across the country that are implementing this program. At the school, the UniServ reps met Vice Principal Trent Heffner and NEA-Rio Rancho President James Pacini, before being briefed for a building "walkthrough" by EPA Region 6 representative Michael Miller.

Then, blueprints and checklists in hand, the Association staffers followed Miller as he conducted a typical indoor air quality check. "We looked at the school exterior and interior—classrooms, bathrooms, science labs, art rooms, cafeteria, and kitchen," reports NEA Health Information Network staffer Jennie Young, who coordinated the tour. "We checked for ventilation, the presence of pests, and signs of moisture—focusing especially on drain traps and stained ceiling tiles and carpeting."

The UniServ folks "loved it," Young notes. "They looked around like detectives and pointed out things we hadn't thought about. Many walked away wanting to call their superintendents as soon as possible about the Tools for Schools program."

Following the walkthrough, Miller

The New Jersey Education Association is engaged in an all-out effort to make aging schools—such as these buildings in East Orange—healthy and safe.

A Toolbox To Shape Up Schools

The 1,200-member East Orange Education Association is just one of several Garden State local affiliates pushing the envelope on cleaner, safer schools, thanks to a four-year-old health and safety program of the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA).

It's a comprehensive effort that includes field training for local health and safety activists, written resources (brochures, a website, and a brand-new manual), a statewide conference (scheduled this year for April 12), and technical assistance to UniServ reps from the nonprofit New Jersey Work Environmental Council—which can provide certified industrial hygienists upon request.

NJEA's health and safety initiatives are starting to bear fruit, even in urban districts where many school buildings are older than your oldest relative.

Through the investigative work of industrial hygienists and extensive community/media outreach, NJEA acted on indoor air quality complaints in Passaic's 99-year-old School 10 and won some $5.5 million in upgrades.

And last autumn, NJEA had students moved from Paterson's School 6 for three months, after Paterson Education Association President Peter Tirri reported that extensive renovation work—involving removal of asbestos, among other substances—was taking place during school hours.

"I walked into a kindergarten class in School 6 and saw barrels marked 'Hazardous Waste,'" shudders UniServ rep John Ropars. "The Association got together with parent groups and forced a meeting with the superintendent and the state Economic Development Authority, which funded this project.

"It's amazing how cooperative a district gets when papers, politicians, and parents raise a stink!" Ropars observes.

NJEA's building cleanup toolbox includes compartments for community outreach (when administrators just won't fix a serious problem) and complaints under the state's Public Employees Occupational Safety and Health Program. But right on the top tray is the trustiest tool of them all: the joint health and safety committee.

"Our East Orange local really takes it on by having negotiated contract language that specifies the union's formal ability to negotiate over health and safety issues," stresses UniServ rep Norm Danzig, who along with Ropars trains health and safety committee members across New Jersey. "These are issues that seriously affect kids as well as staff. We need to take them on as *union* issues—dealing with them as isolated individuals is a losing fight." ✔

—D.W., with contributions from NJEA staffer Dawn Hiltner

For more on the New Jersey Education Association's health and safety program, contact John Ropars at jropars@njea.org or Norm Danzig at ndanzig@njea.org.

debriefed these newly minted air quality experts on what they'd seen at Mountain View. The UniServ reps "listed problems and prioritized them," says Young. "They gave the vice principal and head custodian a lot of new ideas."

All in all, the school—a fairly new facility—shaped up pretty well. Ah, yes, it does have a dust problem, and could use entry mat systems at the doors. But now that it's been inspected by 14 UniServ reps, Mountain View Middle School will shine brighter than ever.

For more on NEA-HIN's Indoor Air Quality in Schools Program, go to www.neahin.org/programs/environmental/iaq.htm.

[KUDOS TO...]

. . . the Sharon (Massachusetts) Joint Health and Safety Committee, which has received an excellence award from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) Tools for Schools program.

The six-member committee, created through bargaining between the Sharon Teachers Association and district, has been busy indeed. Among other gains it has removed hazardous chemicals from schools, improved ventilation systems, replaced water-damaged tiles, extended downspouts to address water problems, removed loose floor tiles containing asbestos, and purchased several HEPA filter vacuum cleaners.

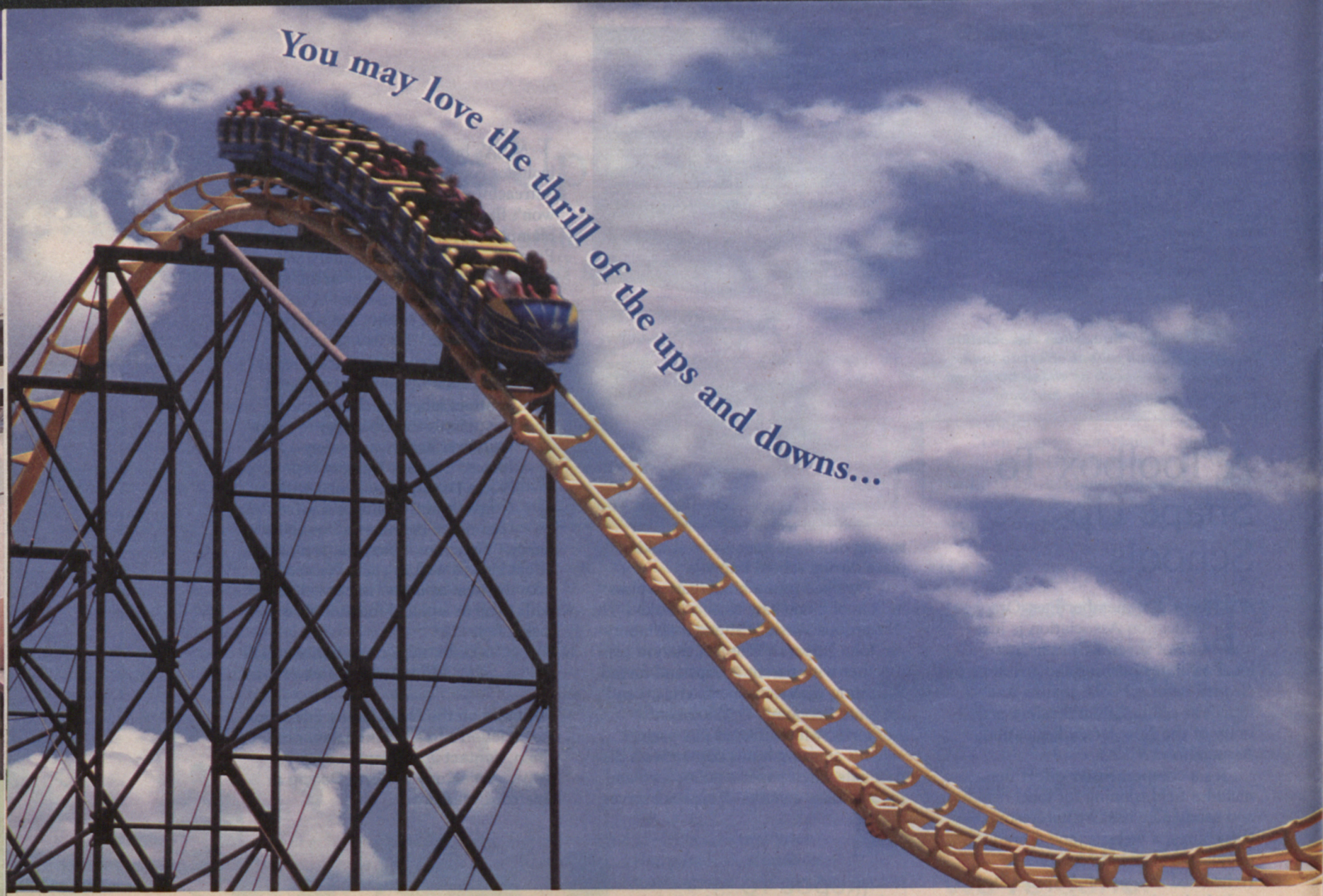
The committee's effective IAQ Management Program relies on extensive data collection, problem area mapping, and teacher checklists and questionnaires. A project such as Tools for Schools "has got to be grassroots," says middle school science teacher Tricia Terrell, the Joint Health and Safety Committee co-chair. "It's got to be local educators looking at what they can do in the classroom." *(Tricia Terrell can be reached at tricia_terrell@sharon.k12.ma.us.)*

. . . California elementary teacher Gloria Mitchell, who, through the Fresno Teachers Association/CTA, has been campaigning against mold in schools. Mitchell advises educators to make an issue out of mold contamination—even if administrators tell them not to worry. "If it happens to you, get your Association involved. Don't let it go," she says. "Get an IAQ Tools for Schools kit [through www.neahin.org/programs/environmental/ iaq.htm], so that you know what to look for and see the warning signs." As a delegate to the 2002 NEA Representative Assembly, Mitchell won unanimous passage of a new business item calling on NEA to review and publicize research on the "environmental impact of mold and toxic mold on children and staff in all school facilities." Check out the next issue of *NEA Today* for an article on the impact of mold exposure.

. . . Shell Oil refinery and chemical plant workers in the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers International Union (OCAW), who waged a historic five-month strike 30 years ago to win specific health and safety language in their contract. Among other goals, those workers sought a joint union-management health and safety committee in every plant, with the right to jointly "inspect, investigate, and review" health and safety conditions.

That was unpalatable stuff for Shell managers back in 1973. They labeled it an "attempt at featherbedding" and declared: "We are legally responsible for the health and safety of Shell employees in the workplace. This responsibility cannot be shared."

In the face of tough company resistance, OCAW—today part of the Paperworkers, Allied-Industrial, Chemical and Energy Workers International Union (PACE)—waged a nationwide Shell boycott and forged alliances with the scientific, academic, environmental, and labor communities. Shell and the OCAW reached a compromise, ending the strike on June 1, 1973. That bargaining agreement broke ground for health and safety language many unions and employers take for granted today.



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Title IX: More Than About Sport

You probably already know that Title IX, the groundbreaking gender equity law, has increased the number of female athletes exponentially since it was passed in 1972. But did you know it has given women and girls a huge boost academically, too?

In 1999-00, for example, women snared 43 percent of the college degrees in medicine and 46 percent of the degrees in law, up from 9 and 8 percent, respectively, in 1972-73.

Thomas Wolanin, senior associate at the Institute for Higher Education Policy, says although Title IX is often thought of as the athletics law, "it was really about young women getting academic opportunities they had been excluded from." Even now, he notes, women still lag sorely behind in college administration and in scientific and technical fields.

Yet recent attention to the law is focusing, again, on sports, as the Bush administration considers changes to the law—in part to answer critics such as male wrestlers, who claim Title IX effectively discriminates against them.

Wolanin and others contend the problem is really high-profile sports such as college football, which eat up big chunks of athletic scholarship monies. "If you gave out half as many college football scholarships," he says, you could give wrestling and swimming more attention, too."

Debra Spina Dixon/Artville

Jennifer Thermes/Artville

Oops—I Thought It Was Asia

So you sent Suzy to the map and she couldn't find...the Pacific Ocean.

If it's any consolation, 3 in 10 young adults worldwide are having the same challenge. According to a National Geographic Society survey, many of the world's 18- to 24-year-olds are on the brink of geographic illiteracy. And young Americans are struggling the hardest. Among 3,000 youth surveyed from nine countries, U.S. youngsters scored next to last, followed by Mexico's youth. Less than 15 percent of American youth could locate Iraq and Israel, and they struggled with the location of other well-known countries. And almost one-third grossly overestimated the U.S. population, putting it at a whopping 1 to 2 billion, not 289 million.

Experts say geographic knowledge increases with more teaching of it in school and at home, as well as through travel, language proficiency, and personal identification with current events. So to help usher young adults to a geographic higher plane, the National Geographic Society has put together a coalition of media, policy, and education organizations—of which NEA is a part—to map out a plan for improvement. Stay tuned. For more on the survey (and to test your own literacy), see **http://geosurvey.nationalgeographic.com/geosurvey/.**

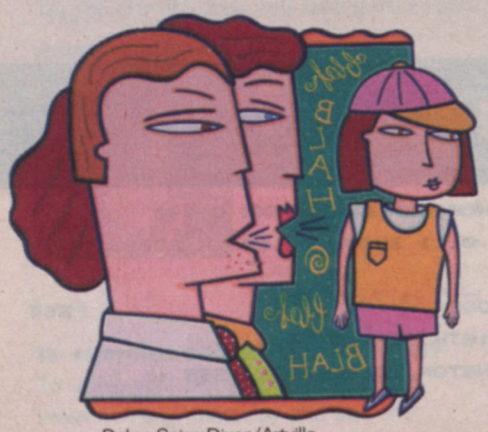
Separate Once Again

Think segregation went the way of the '60s? Think again, says a new study from Harvard University's Civil Rights Project (CRP). Using data from the 2000-01 school year, the CRP tracked sharp declines across the country in the percentage of Caucasians in public schools attended by minorities. "The numbers are startling," says Chungmei Lee, CRP research associate and a study co-author. Indeed, the progress made in achieving integrated schools since the 1960s, she says, has effectively been reversed. But unlike in the '60s, the trend is hardly toward just a separation of African-Americans and Caucasians. Latinos, often clustered in poor, urban schools with limited exposure to native English speakers, are now the most segregated of all minority groups, says Lee. In New York, for example, almost 60 percent of Latinos attend schools with 90-100 percent minority enrollment.

Although minority student enrollment has climbed to 40 percent nationally, the CRP says the average white student still attends a school that is 80 percent white. In the Northeast and Midwest, one-fourth of African-American students are enrolled in virtually all-minority schools. The South, although rapidly re-segregating after a series of Supreme Court decisions ending court-ordered integration, still offers the best chance for students of different races to work together in school.

Lee says the fix necessarily lies in the courts. "Some people assume desegregation only benefits minority students," she notes, "but we know from a variety of studies that children in diverse schools learn to think analytically because they're exposed to different points of view." For more, read **A Multiracial Society with Segregated Schools: Are We Losing the Dream? at www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/note.**

Shirley V. Beckes/Artville



Debra Spina Dixon/Artville

Disciplined Kids? Parents Wish

If teachers think *they* have it rough keeping Johnny from pouncing on Bobby, they're in fine company. According to a recent survey, just 34 percent of parents report success in teaching their kids self-control and self-discipline, and they report similar slow progress teaching "absolutely essential values" such as wanting to do one's best in school.

The national survey of 1,600 moms and dads by Public Agenda, a nonprofit public opinion research organization, found parents are pretty frustrated in their quest to raise responsible kids and believe their jobs are complicated by endless negative messages from the mass media. As a result, only about half say they've done a good job ensuring their children are honest and truthful, and even fewer report success in teaching them how to have self-control, do things for themselves, and spend money carefully.

As always, there's a ray of hope, as more than 60 percent of parents say they've managed to teach their kids to be courteous and polite. So next time Johnny pops Bobby, no doubt Johnny will apologize. Furiously. For more, see **www.publicagenda.org/specials/parents/parents.htm.**

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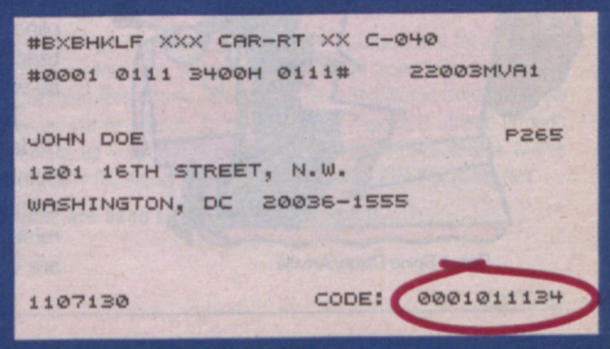

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Andy Powell

Is summer school worthwhile?

yes

When a school budget needs to be trimmed, summer school is often the first to go. That shouldn't be. Summer school can be valuable both for students who need extra help and for those who want to explore.

In my city, two school districts have vastly different approaches to summer school. One generally requires that a student has failed a class during the regular school year before registering for the same class in the summer. Students who excel cannot go.

But in the district my two daughters attend, enrichment classes are offered that students can take just because they are interested or because they want to finish high school early and start working on college credits. My daughters went to summer school every year. Sometimes they took classes that were not academically rigorous but allowed them to explore new subjects. They had more credits than they needed in senior year, allowing them either to take additional classes or to work part-time to help pay their future education costs.

Summer school allowed my daughters to continue to learn, grow, and be intellectually challenged—a class or two in the morning and the rest of the day was relatively free for swimming, sports, and sunning.

Education research shows that children lose a great deal of what they have learned during the idle summer months. My children lost less than many of their peers, learned valuable new material, had less free time to get into trouble, and still had time for extra activities like sports.

Here is another benefit of including high achievers: Summer school should meet national education standards, and that can be difficult to accomplish if all the students in a summer school class have failed previously.

If we are going to turn out top scholars in science and other fields important for our advancement as a society and for national defense, we must provide opportunities for young people who love to learn. We must make education a priority and fund it appropriately for the benefit of all children—then maybe our children will take it more seriously.

PAM GALUS teaches science and runs the planetarium at Burke High School in Omaha, Nebraska. She has taught for 11 years and has published two books and more than 100 articles on science education. She is National Board certified.

no

Generally, summer school lasts four to five weeks and the assumption is that students will learn all the material that they didn't learn in 20 weeks. Now let's be realistic: If a student was unable to learn the material in 20 weeks, it isn't likely he or she will learn the equivalent material in four or five.

For some reason, summer school programs seem to lack expectations and accountability. I've heard comments from students that summer school was "so easy and such a blow off...we didn't do anything but play games and watch movies." One student told me that he never took a test in his summer school math class. His grade was based on attendance and assignments. If we had those expectations during the regular school year, most of us would be fired.

If summer school is a means for giving someone a second chance, why should that mean making it easier or less challenging? On the flip side, there are some students who wish to get ahead, yet we don't really offer them anything worthwhile or academically challenging for a summer school program.

Part of the problem is that we offer too many choices as an alternative to being successful during the regular school year. Summer school programs generally are watered down mini-course versions of what we offer during the regular school year. Many times, the people teaching summer school classes are either uncertified or teaching out of their content area.

Summer school could be successful if two things were to happen. First, summer school must have the same expectations that we hold during the regular school year. All classes must be taught by certified teachers and summer school must be long enough to allow teachers to cover the material. Second, students who are failing because of inability, not apathy, can benefit from a summer program that teaches them some of the basic skills that they lack. If a student cannot add, subtract, multiply, or divide in high school, retaking algebra doesn't solve the real problem. If we're going to offer summer school, let's offer it to those students who really need and deserve it.

MICHAEL ROSS has taught mathematics at Berkley High School in Berkley, Michigan for two years. Prior to that, he taught for four years in the Detroit Public Schools. He taught mathematics in summer school for two summers.

What's Your Opinion?

Is summer school worthwhile?
To vote, visit our website at www.nea.org/neatoday and see the results instantly.

Should all high schools have fewer than 1,000 students?
The tally on the question in the last *NEA Today:*
12% Yes **88% No**

Should we do away with homework?
If you'd like to take part in this future Debate, send a brief note to Alain Jehlen, ajehlen@nea.org.

Grist for the Learning Mill

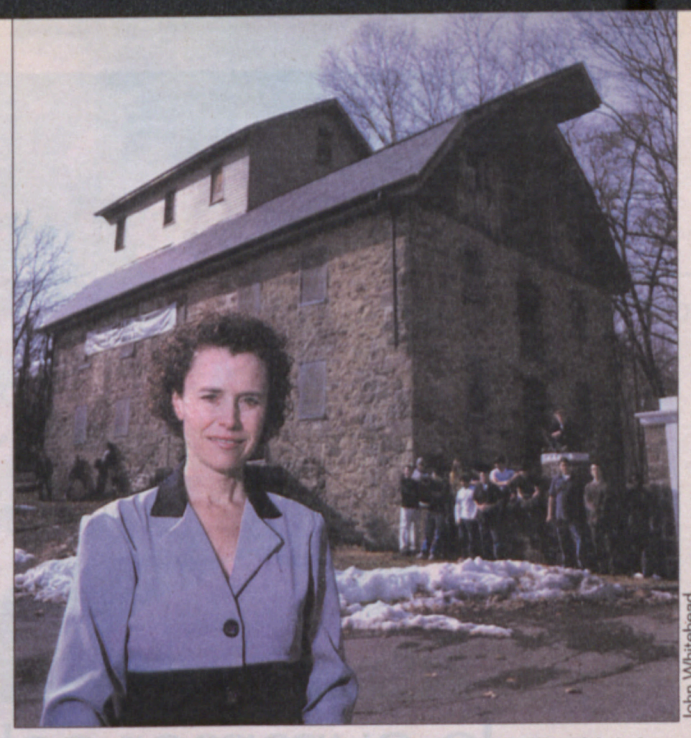
How one NEA member is helping students run a business of their own.

A center for community history and environmental education will soon rear its head in a historic gristmill in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. But you won't find the usual activists doing this work. Rather, 21 high school students under the supervision of English teacher Karen Dolan have formed a nonprofit organization called the Illick's Mill Project. They created the center and are planning and executing every step of the mill's restoration.

"I came up with the idea because I've always believed teaching works best when you connect it to the real world and meet a community need," says Dolan, who launched the project with her Liberty High School students in 2001. "Illick's Mill was built in 1856 and has always been a landmark in Bethlehem, but it's run-down and overlooked as a historical part of the community," Dolan notes. "When the state passed stringent new environmental laws concerning local watersheds, it occurred to me that the mill could serve as an education center, and that students could take on the project for academic credit."

The response to Dolan's idea was quick and enthusiastic. Liberty students participating in the Illick's Mill Project earn history credit by researching and archiving the background of the gristmill. And they earn English credit by writing all materials connected to the nonprofit, from news releases to fund-raising letters to grant proposals.

"I've become so immersed in the project that I don't know when I'll actually realize just how much I've learned along the way," says Meghan Haas, a senior who serves as community liaison for the project. "I'm not even a college student, and I've already learned to write grants and public relations materials for an organization that is succeeding beyond our expectations."



John Whitehead

Karen Dolan stands outside historic Illick's Mill, which her students (in background) will restore on their own.

The Illick's Mill Project is succeeding, indeed. The group has raised $210,000 in 18 months, including $83,000 in grants written by students. Other sources of fund-raising have included corporate sponsorships and an annual environmental music concert, RiverFusion, produced by the students.

"RiverFusion is really about bringing the community together as well as raising money," says Peter Fritz, a senior and musician who serves as the concert coordinator. "We feature all kinds of music and involve the community by offering events like an open mike concert."

RiverFusion, which is held near the mill on Monocacy Creek, drew 3,500 people last year and raised $30,000. Fritz projects it will double in size this year.

Dolan hopes that once the mill is restored and the environmental center is open, the school district will permit the Illick's Mill Project to move its offices from the high school into the mill, and offer students the chance to work at the center for academic credit.

—Matt Simon

For More: E-mail the Illick's Mill Project at millproject@yahoo.com or visit their website at www.illicksmill.org.

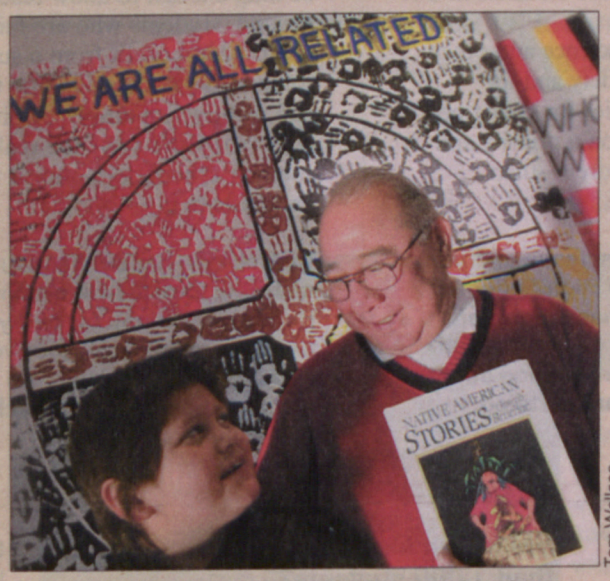
Standing Up for Children

Lloyd Elm could not escape his destiny to teach. His American Indian name means "he who stands for children," and by age 14 he knew where his life was headed. "Most of the men in my family were iron workers, but I knew that I was going to be different," he says.

And different he is. For more than 30 years Elm, two-time winner of NEA's Leo Reano Memorial Award for Human and Civil Rights, has transformed the lives of his students by teaching innovative reading skills and pursuing a compassionate quest to ensure that all children are treated equally.

As principal of Mounds Park All Nations Magnet School in St. Paul, Minnesota, Elm rescued the school from academic decline with his Balanced Literacy Program. Through the program, children learn to read by learning a whole concept and then breaking the idea into smaller parts. For example, for a lesson about animals, Elm recommends presenting all the animals together and then allowing children to learn about each individual animal as it relates to the group. "We have to shift from teacher-centered learning to child-centered learning," Elm says. "We must allow students to see themselves within the process."

When children connect their environments to what they are learning, reading becomes natural, he says. This concept has been a pivotal teaching tool for American Indian students as the children recognize themselves in stories and lessons infused with American Indian culture and customs. "You have to let the children guide you through their learning and allow them to have ownership," he adds.



Tom Wallace

Lloyd Elm says when children connect what they learn to their environments, reading becomes easier.

While Elm has garnered praise for his work with American Indian students at Mounds Park in St. Paul and the Native American School in Buffalo, New York, he doesn't attribute his exceptional career to test scores. His career rests on the belief that all children are sacred.

"We have to make children the center of everything," he says.

—Leah Lakins

For More: Contact Lloyd Elm at 651/778-3100 or e-mail Lloyd.elm@spps.org.

Making Cultural Peace

Schaumburg School District 54 just north of Chicago is not unlike many other suburban districts wrestling with change. In the last decade, the number of students from racial and ethnic minorities have almost doubled—from 18 to 35 percent—and the community rainbow just keeps getting brighter. But adjusting to the new multicultural mix has at times been wrenching.

"We could see there were problems—misunderstandings between parents, between students, between teachers and parents, and on and on," says Joanne Ayers, president of the Schaumburg Education Association. Conflicts around bilingual programs, cultural differences, religious holidays—the issues ran the gamut.

So two years ago the Association joined forces with the Schaumburg Educational Employees (which represents support professionals), the Bilingual Division of the school district, and the Anti-Defamation League. They came up with a three-year training program to help Schaumburg's educators and students develop skills to live and work "civilly" in a diverse community while learning how to challenge discrimination and prejudice.

"We wanted to figure out how to capitalize on the diversity and really learn about ourselves," says Ayers. "But we wanted to do it in a way that didn't add anything more to a teacher's plate—something that could be incorporated into the curriculum and just become a part of who you are."

Now in its second year, the results have been eye-opening and by all accounts, wildly encouraging. So encouraging, in fact, that the partners were awarded an NEA Urban Grant last year to help continue the good works.

The centerpiece of the program is an intense four-day training session, run by the Anti-Defamation League, that focuses first on helping educators and administrators understand how their life experiences have shaped their own unconscious biases, then offers skills and curriculum ideas for helping them and their students "check" their behaviors and better appreciate their differences.

"We've had some people who were absolutely shocked because they thought they were very much part of the mainstream," Ayers says, "but their experiences were actually so isolated, that other people's experiences were totally alien to them."

Judy McDonald, a social studies teacher at Keller Junior High, says the training was "exhausting and emotional," but "opened my eyes to cultural differences. What I see in my classroom as rude or insubordinate behavior, for example, may not be that at all." She's using what she learned to help her students be more thoughtful about biases that may undergird research studies and media reports, and has helped her school develop a survey to assess related schoolwide concerns.

Blanca Nache, a reading specialist at MacArthur Elementary School, says she now takes her students through exercises to make them aware of how they stereotype others and form cliques. And she's been able to help ease misunderstandings between older teachers and younger ones like herself. The faculty dynamic, she says, has improved dramatically, "and students notice."

Ayers says the hope is that over time more teachers will be able to go through the training, and that they in turn can become trainers for their colleagues. "It's not a magic pill," she says. "Schools don't get transformed overnight, but there's progress." After all, she says, "This is about changing the way we think. It's a way of life."

—Marilyn Milloy

Nina Frenkel/Artville

For More: Contact Joanne Ayers at JudithMcdonald@sd54.k12.il.us. For more information about the NEA Urban Grants program, visit www.nea.org/grants/urban.

Calming Students with Puppy Love

Renee Cachuela never imagined when she started teaching two years ago that a cute little Jack Russell terrier with a face to die for would be the star of her class. But so he is, and his name is Finnegan.

He happens to be Cachuela's own pup, and to her delight, he's slowly but surely helping to raise the "empathy quotient" in her class, turning it day by day into a place where students understand the meaning of respect, fair play, and calm.

This is no small feat. At McClure Middle School in Seattle, Washington, Cachuela teaches students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Her biggest challenge, she says, is getting them to quiet their aggression, develop anger management skills, and focus.

Enter "animal therapy," which Cachuela read about while surfing the Internet one day. Pets, she discovered, were being used to help soothe patients in hospitals and nursing homes—and though there was no mention of their success in the classroom, the 29-year-old was intrigued.

She looked at Finnegan, he looked at her and, well, a team was born.

Cachuela began bringing Finnegan to class every day and within four months, she says, the classroom seemed notably less chaotic. "They just love him," she says. "Right now I have kids who are really aggressive, yet are so gentle with the dog." She recently showed a movie about dogs, she says, and her students "were just talking to Finnegan so sweetly. 'See, there you are on TV, see…see….'" Cachuela says she tries to capitalize on that kind of humane connection to spotlight behavior her students can model with their peers.

So far Cachuela has been using Finnegan, who's finishing up certification as a service dog, as a reward when students stay on task (they earn "free" time with him) and to promote responsibility (they take turns feeding and walking him). She's also incorporated dog care into writing assignments. Last year students designed a brochure with tips.

But Cachuela has bigger ideas, and she's using an Innovation Grant from The NEA Foundation to pursue them. She'd like to build a doghouse, for example, so she can teach measuring and other math skills while promoting group camaraderie. She wants to use other multidisciplinary activities, too, such as budgeting the cost of owning a dog and investigating the anatomical differences between dogs and other animals, all with the eye toward boosting critical thinking skills and building concentration.

"It's all still in the beginning stages," Cachuela says. "There's just not a whole lot of work out there that's been done around this, but I'm thrilled about the possibilities."

—M.M.

For More: Contact Renee Cachuela at cachuela@bc.edu. Apply for a grant today from The NEA Foundation at www.nfie.org.

Ellen Banner

Renee Cachuela is using her dog Finnegan to help build camaraderie, respect, and teamwork among her students.

The Untolerated

What happens to students who run afoul of strict discipline rules?

Wrestling coach Scott Brokaw's school in Hardin, Montana, factors in the local hunting culture when determining how to punish violations of school weapons codes.

To a Michigan honor student named Alex, it was only a joke, a parody he wrote to poke fun at his high school's new tardy policy and the administrators who designed it. Never did he think the spoof, read to friends at the cafeteria table, would get his name added to the growing list of "good" kids suspended or expelled nationwide under so-called zero-tolerance (ZT) policies.

Enacted in the wake of tragic school shootings and a spike in violent juvenile crime in the mid-90s, these policies first targeted guns and drugs. But according to a study by The Civil Rights Project at Harvard University, well-intentioned efforts have "spun totally out of control," expanding to include automatic or exceedingly harsh punishments for minor infractions that pose little or no threat to school safety.

Lisa Buser

"The rationale behind [zero-tolerance policies] was good," says high school special education teacher Connice Ross, "but I don't know how effective the implementation has been."

In 1998, more than 3.1 million children in the United States were suspended and another 87,000 expelled. Although record-keeping is inadequate, Harvard says there's evidence these numbers are on the rise. The availability and quality of support services and alternative schools vary from district to district, so these students are often home alone, bored, or even engaging in daytime crime.

Federal law mandates support for special education students, but only after the first suspension of more than 10 days.

Now a freshman at Michigan State, Alex says the October 2000 incident drove him to tears. "I saw everything I had worked for about to be devastated." In his case, the charge requiring suspension was "verbal assault," a term so broad the American Civil Liberties Union is challenging the policy in federal court on First Amendment grounds.

"For most of us, when we break a law, we know it. In this case, I had no idea," explains Alex. Taken out of class by an armed liaison officer, he ended up with an eight-day suspension. It's a blot on his record that plagued him during his college application process and has followed him into the job market.

"I've had to explain that verbal assault is not a violent crime," he says. The incident showed up on a police background check when he applied for the cadet program in a Michigan police department, delaying his application for about four months.

A study released in February by Building Blocks for Youth, a coalition of groups focusing on juvenile justice issues, calls the number of students suspended since the surge in ZT policies "staggering." Data from Kentucky, the focus of the study, show suspension rates 2 to 17 times greater for African-Americans than for Caucasians.

Other studies have found similar results for minorities nationwide. "Suspension may be a quick fix, but it contributes to the achievement gap and starts the chain of events that leads to kids dropping out," says David Richart, one of the Building Blocks study authors and executive director of the National Institute on Children, Youth and Families at Spalding University in Louisville.

In many states, offenses related to classroom behavior now merit a call to police and a trip to juvenile court.

Richart sympathizes with educators who advocate ZT policies in response to school environments with few resources, overcrowded classrooms, and volatile populations. He advocates increased student services and better staff training.

For Howard Hastings, there's no question his son Karel broke the law in eighth grade when he brought a marijuana cigarette to his Northern Virginia school and gave it to a friend. Expelled for the 2000-01 school year for this first offense, Karel was placed in an alternative program with older, more troubled youths.

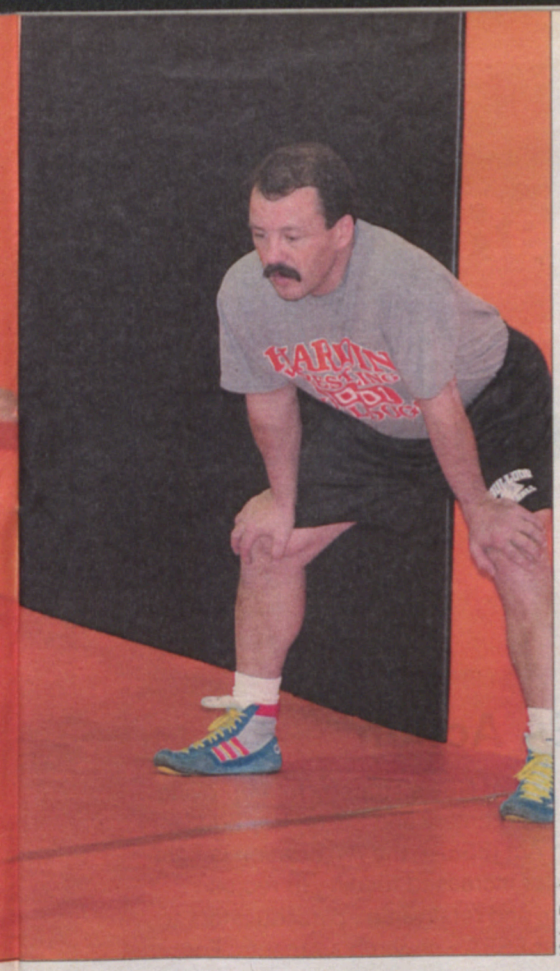
"We were losing him," says Hastings, who eventually sent his son to Hardin, Montana, to live with grandparents and finish ninth grade. Karel wrestled, was drug-free, and did well academically in Hardin, where a similar offense would garner a three-day suspension and enrollment in a drug-education program.

"What happened to Karel was pretty harsh," says Scott Brokaw, a Hardin High School teacher and wrestling coach who met the teenager when he joined the junior varsity team. "I've never heard of anything like that here. We work on a case-by-case basis."

Some of the 450 high schoolers carry

"What happened to Karel was pretty harsh. I've never heard of anything like that here. We work on a case-by-case basis."

—Scott Brokaw, wrestling coach



Kyle Brehm

pocketknives, Brokaw says. One left a hunting rifle in his pick-up in the school lot. Those infractions may merit in-school suspension or, in the gun case, three days out of school. "It's our culture," he says. "Kids may be out hunting before school. I've never seen any weapon-related violence."

ZT punishes students too severely for "stupid teenage mistakes," says Shelli Weisberg, school board member in Birmingham, Michigan. She cites the case of an 18-year-old star wrestler expelled for his senior year for committing a felony on school grounds. (He had sex on campus with his underage girlfriend during summer vacation.)

"He never knew he was breaking the law," she says. "He had a full scholarship to Michigan State. He lost it all and it's really thrown him. I'll break the law before I vote to do something like that again. We failed this kid and his family."

After two years working in an alternative junior and senior high school in Shelby County, Tennessee, high school special education teacher Connice Ross is still undecided about ZT. "I think the rationale behind it was good, but I don't know how effective the implementation has been."

She remembers one student who didn't seem bitter about his year's suspension for bringing a souvenir knife to school just to show around. He actually "matured" under the alternative school's strict structure, she says.

"In our zeal to make schools safer we try a lot of things. I lean toward making case-by-case decisions," says Ross. "ZT may appease the public rather than help students. If we're going to have it, we'd better have good alternative schools for kids to fall back on." ✔

—Mary Anne Hess

For more: Visit www.civilrightsproject.harvard.edu/ and www.ztnightmares.com.

Kyle Brehm

[DILEMMA]

How do you help kids cope with test-taking anxiety?

On test days, I wear my Elmo slippers to class. We turn down the lights and listen to a piece of classical music. Then we get serious and take the test. I have no real data to prove the students score better, but I do know the funny slippers and the calming music take their minds off of their fear.

Paula Throckmorton
Fifth-grade teacher
Petersburg, Illinois

■ I tell my students to:

1) Study actively and daily.

2) Mental vomit. That means, when you receive the test paper, write down everything you recall on the topic before beginning the test. The term appeals to middle schoolers. Writing everything in advance helps jump-start their memories.

3) Read the paper through first. The emphasis is on reading to locate the hidden treasure (answers buried elsewhere within the test) and to cue their memories.

Noreen McAloon
Middle school reading specialist
Bedford, New Hampshire

■ All through my own schooling, the word "test" struck me with debilitating fear. When I became a teacher, I realized there were many kids with the same fear, so I don't use the word "test" in my classroom. I use the word "Zimbabwe." You can use any cool-sounding word.

Kathleen O'Daniel
Fourth-grade teacher
Juneau, Alaska

■ I teach AP English to seniors and these students tend to be very anxious about doing well on tests. I use chocolates—little individual wrapped ones—and give them out before tests. I do this to help students relax, take a moment to enjoy something nice, and get focused. It takes some of the stress out of the whole process.

Julianne Mach
High school English teacher
Marysville, Washington

■ I use three techniques. The first is positive visualization. Students close their eyes, take a deep breath, and visualize themselves sitting at their desks taking the test feeling confident and relaxed. It's very important that they "see" minor details in the room such as a scratch on the desk. They do this every night for a week before the exam.

I also teach them yoga breathing techniques—breathe out, inhale (count to seven), and then exhale to the silent count of seven.

The third technique is to create a positive affirmation such as "I am confident and relaxed when I take a test." They repeat this daily.

Have students choose the technique that works for them and watch the test scores soar.

Michele Krouse
Middle school guidance counselor
Boynton Beach, Florida

■ One of my favorite techniques is "rotate and shake." The kids start from the bottom and work their way up, rotating ankles, shaking legs, rotating their torsos around their hips, shaking their arms, rotating their hands around their wrists, and then gently bending their heads from side to side and

Ted Pitts

front and back. I emphasize breathing and getting the blood circulating, bringing oxygen to their brains.

For kids who are too shy to get up and move, I teach "circular breathing." Pinch one nostril closed and breathe in and out slowly and deeply through the other. Then do the same on the other side. Switch back and forth. This calms them down and enriches the blood with oxygen.

Nicole Baker-Foresta
Dramatic arts teacher
Holyoke, Massachusetts

Got an answer?

When you work with a small group, how do you keep the rest of your class engaged?

E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job title. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

Real Teachers. . . know when to be quiet and let student thinking take over.

Diane Benzek,
high school math teacher,
Bement, Illinois

NEA Today
The Magazine of the National Education Association

Special Report on ESEA

For Paras, ESEA Raises the Bar

Ever had to prove that you were qualified to do a job *after* you'd been doing it successfully for years?

That's the situation facing many of NEA's paraeducator members who must comply with beefed-up requirements enacted as part of the reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). The new rules for qualifications have many paras wondering where they stand.

"There's a considerable amount of concern among paraeducators, mainly having to do with how the law affects their job situation and the effort and expense it will take to fulfill the requirements," says Donovan King, an organizational specialist in NEA's Department of ESP Quality. "I have heard from many of our members who say: 'I've been a paraeducator for 20 years. The teachers, the parents, and the students know that I'm good at what I do. And now the federal government is telling me I'm not qualified?'"

In a nutshell, here's how the new ESEA provisions impact paras.

- The requirements apply *only* to "paraprofessionals" performing instructional support duties such as tutoring, assisting with instruction in a classroom or computer lab, providing assistance in a library or media center, translating, or conducting parental involvement activities. The requirements apply to those working in Title I-funded programs. (According to the U.S. Department of Education, this includes all paras employed in schools receiving schoolwide Title I funding, or those whose positions are funded by Title I in schools receiving targeted aid.) The federal requirements do not apply to non-Title I paras, paras who work *solely* as translators, paras doing *only* parental involvement activities, or those who do not perform instructional support duties.
- The new provisions for Title I paras mandate that newly hired paraeducators must have a high school diploma or the equivalent and meet one of the following:
  - Have an associate's degree;
  - Have two years of college; or
  - Pass a state or local assessment that demonstrates knowledge of reading, writing, and math and the ability to assist with instruction.

Affected paraeducators hired on or before January 8, 2002, must meet these requirements by January 8, 2006.

About one-third of NEA's paraeducator members already have an associate's degree, thereby ensuring that they comply with the new requirements. Many others may have completed two years of college. NEA affiliates and locals are undertaking a variety of measures to help paras who do not yet meet the new provisions. Examples include securing funding for programs to assist paraeducators in meeting the requirements and conducting workshops to prepare members for tests or portfolio-building. (For more, see "No Para Left Behind," March 2003 *NEA Today*, pages 30-31.)

This *Special Report on ESEA* contains an easy-to-follow flow chart (next page) to help paras determine how the ESEA's provisions on qualifications may affect them. For additional details, check out the sources at the right and consult your local NEA representatives regarding local and state requirements for paras.

Simon Shaw

NEA Action

- As part of NEA's strategy for improving the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), the Association is fighting for increased funding to recruit, train, and retain Title I paraeducators to meet ESEA's new requirements. For updates, check out www.nea.org/lac.
- Locals and state affiliates are working closely with state education officials and representatives of higher education to offer paraeducators college coursework and training for assessments.

What You Can Do

- Make sure to document your credentials. For example, keep copies of your transcripts or certificates of attendance at professional development workshops.
- Work with your local Association representatives to find out what assessments your state or district plans to use as one route to meeting ESEA's new qualifications requirement. You can help by lobbying for funding for increased training to help paras meet the new provisions.

For More Info

- Check out the ESP area of NEA's website for quick clicks on what the new ESEA means for paras. Go to www.nea.org/esphome/issues/eseapara.html.
- For the latest on the new ESEA and the regulations for implementing it, visit the U.S. Department of Education's website at www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/asst.html. Links are changed frequently, so the best method for finding the most recent information is to click on the sections marked "NCLB Legislation," "NCLB Regulations," and "NCLB Policy Guidance" and search for links relating to Title I paraprofessionals.

This section of NEA Today *was compiled by John O'Neil and Kristen Loschert*

ESEA Requirements for Paraeducators

To determine how the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act provisions on paraeducators may affect you, follow the flow charts below through the Coverage and Qualifications sections.

Coverage

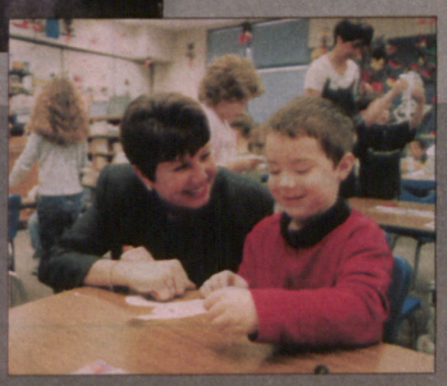
Do you provide instructional assistance, such as assisting with instruction in a classroom or computer lab, providing one-on-one tutoring, translating, assisting in a library or media center, or conducting parental involvement activities?

- **YES** — Do you work in a program supported with Title I funds?*
  - **YES** — Do you have a high school diploma or equivalent?
    - **YES** — Does your job consist solely of language translation or parental involvement activities?
      - **YES** — You have met the ESEA qualifications and are NOT required to meet additional qualifications.**
      - **NO** — GO TO QUALIFICATIONS section.
    - **NO** — You have not met the requirements. ESEA requires ALL covered paraprofessionals to have a high school diploma or equivalent.
  - **NO** — You are NOT required to meet the ESEA qualifications.**
- **NO** — You are NOT required to meet the ESEA qualifications.**

Qualifications

Do you have an associate's degree?

- **YES** — You have met the ESEA requirements for paraprofessionals.
- **NO** — Do you have two years of study at an institution of higher education?
  - **YES** — You have met the ESEA requirements for paraprofessionals.
  - **NO** — Have you passed a state or local assessment on your knowledge of and ability to assist in the teaching of reading, writing, and math?
    - **YES** — You have met the ESEA requirements for paraprofessionals.
    - **NO** — Were you hired ON or BEFORE January 8, 2002, the effective date of ESEA?
      - **YES** — You have until January 8, 2006, to meet one of the ESEA requirements for paraprofessionals.
      - **NO** — You have not met ESEA requirements. ESEA requires covered paraprofessionals hired AFTER January 8, 2002, to have met one of the qualifications upon employment.



Source: NEA Department of ESP Quality

nea
NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION
www.nea.org

*This includes both schoolwide Title I funding and targeted aid under Part A.

**Check for additional state or local requirements.

Pursuing Teaching Excellence

National Board Certification sets high standards and big rewards for teachers.

Gary Emeigh

Bobbie Kilgore says the National Board Certification process made her a more reflective teacher.

Bobbie Kilgore has teaching in her blood. Her mother, uncle, and sister all work as teachers, and all have received one of the profession's highest achievements: National Board Certification.

Kilgore, the youngest teacher in her family, didn't let them down. In November, the fifth-year teacher from Milford, Delaware, became the latest family member to meet the standard.

"Seeing them all go through it, I knew it was something I had to do," says Kilgore, a third-grade teacher at Lulu Ross Elementary School. "It's a very rewarding process, but I also got to see how much time and commitment it took to go through."

Cherie Diez

Gayle Clark helps a student in her class.

Teachers who achieve National Board Certification describe it as the most rewarding—and most demanding—professional development experience of their careers. The voluntary advanced credentialing process, offered by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), evaluates a teacher's content knowledge and skills in the classroom. National Board Certification does not replace a state license. Instead, it serves as a symbol of teaching excellence awarded to those teachers whose performance meets the National Board standards. NEA helped start the National Board in 1987.

But achieving National Board Certification is no easy task.

To apply, teachers must have at least three years of teaching experience, a bachelor's degree, and a state teaching license. They also pay a $2,300 application fee. Thirty states pay the fee in full for teachers who pursue the process, while several others cover half the fee. Teachers also can receive low-interest loans from NEA Member Benefits.

The certification process requires teachers to prepare a portfolio that includes student work, lesson plans, videotapes of class activities, recommendations from colleagues, and an in-depth analysis of the teacher's instructional strategies. Preparation takes anywhere from 200 to 600 hours.

Candidates also complete a written test on content specific to their fields.

"Doing the portfolio was much more grueling than I expected," says Kilgore. "It required hours upon hours of work and very concentrated reflection on my teaching. In comparison, I'm also working on my doctorate and the National Board Certification process was much more work."

The process can be exhausting, says Gayle Clark, a National Board Certified Teacher (NBCT) from Brandon, Florida, currently in her fifth year of teaching. But it helps teachers learn more about their students and themselves, she says.

"You're asked about your big ideas, goals, and objectives," says Clark, a fourth-grade teacher at Limona Elementary School. "It makes you focus on your kids as individuals and what has been accomplished, rather than looking at what your state or county says your curriculum should be."

The entire process can take more than 10 months to complete. Candidates who do not pass part of the assessment or portfolio have two years to retake the exercises.

Many state and local Associations offer workshops to support teachers during the process. Current NBCTs, like Clark, often mentor new candidates as well.

"Find that support network for yourself," Clark suggests. "People who have been certified are very happy to help you. It also puts you in connection with some really fine teachers."

Most teachers who attempt the process have more than 10 years of teaching experience. Although the candidate pool continues to broaden, teachers like Kilgore and Clark still are the minority.

"It was a little intimidating when you know teachers who are trying this process with you have been teaching for 10 or 15 years and some of them have difficulty," Kilgore says. "But if you are a good teacher and a reflective teacher, I think you will do well."

Even though National Board Certification demands a lot from its candidates, it offers significant rewards. More than 30 states, including Delaware and Florida, provide a salary supplement or bonus to teachers who receive the certification. Meanwhile, 35 states and the District of Columbia waive part of their licensing requirements for NBCTs. Several states also apply National Board Certification toward license renewal.

"It's a very satisfying process," says Kilgore. "And knowing that you've passed gives you that acknowledgment that others find you a good teacher." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Testing Tips

My students make posters with test-taking tips that I use to cover important information posted on the walls so no one can see it during test week. The posters say things such as "get a good night's sleep," "eat a healthy breakfast," and "read carefully." If you use construction paper and magic markers your room will be friendly and colorful while being free of potential cheat sheets. Afterward, I remove the posters to reveal the original information.

Sue Buzby
King George, Virginia

Magnetic Schedule

Using my word processor, I print the name of each subject on brightly colored paper. Then I cut each item into an individual strip and laminate it. I also print the names of special events onto different colored paper, cut them into strips, and laminate them as well. I glue magnets to the back of each strip. I use the strips to display the schedule of activities on the board. They are easy to rearrange. When there is a special event on the schedule, the students spot it right away because it is on a different color strip.

Mary Beth Zorger
Wilmington, Delaware

Two-Minute Tips Works4Me
nea's e-mail classroom tip of the week!

Have a great idea?

You can pass along your tip to *NEA Today*'s 2.7 million readers in one of five ways:

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- By phone: 202/822-7201
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- By e-mail: Ideas@neatoday.nea.org
- Through the Web: www.nea.org/neatoday

[DILEMMA]

How do you help a student who enters your class in the middle of the year?

Instead of just assigning a new student to any empty seat, I announce that it is time for a new seating chart. Then I place the new student with friendly students who can help make the new student comfortable.

Lisa McBride
Secondary social studies teacher
Owasso, Oklahoma

■ I review our classroom rules and procedures. This helps the new student understand the expectations for the class and gives the others a refresher course. I also schedule a group activity to help the new student get acquainted.

Lila Gisler
Special education teacher
Salt Lake City, Utah

■ I give the student a short quiz to determine the student's weak points. I let the student work on weak points in class and work on his or her strongest points at home for extra credit.

Lorraine Ellerbe
Middle school English and math teacher
Wadesboro, North Carolina

■ I introduce the new student to my class and find out which students have classes with their new classmate. I also find out who has the same lunch period as the new student and ask those children to invite the new student to their table.

Linda Kelty
Middle school art teacher
Muscatine, Iowa

Ted Pitts

■ I contact the student's previous teacher to learn about the student's personality and learning style. I also send home pertinent information, such as class rules and class newsletters, so the child's parents know what has taken place during the year.

Kelly Curtin
First-grade teacher
Freehold, New Jersey

■ I keep extra class folders assembled with a welcome letter, class and lab rules, and a course syllabus. When a new student enters my class I give him or her a folder. This saves me time and allows me to help the student adapt to the new class.

Leslie Dalbey
Middle school science teacher
Nampa, Idaho

■ I buddy the new student with a friendly student in my classroom who helps the new student with school and classroom procedures. I also meet with the parents to explain any questions or concerns they may have.

Carla Young
Primary teacher
Mount Washington, Kentucky

■ My students make a "Welcome to Our Class" banner. The students paste photographs of themselves on the banner and sign their names under their pictures. During this process, they brainstorm ways to make the new student feel comfortable.

Barbara Herbert
First-grade teacher
Wayside, New Jersey

■ I have several activity packets that students complete during the semester. When new students arrive I give them the packets we have completed, mark the most important assignments, and ask them to complete them.

Gerda Mullen
High school ESOL Teacher

Got an Answer?

How do you work with a wide range of abilities in one class?
E-mail your answer to dilemma2@list.nea.org. Or send by regular mail, or fax to 202/822-7206. Include your name, city, state, and job. If published, you will receive an *NEA Today* mug!

Nobody Ever Told Me

What an Appetite

Every afternoon I complimented this one particular student who always began her homework while she waited for her bus; but I never could understand why she never had her homework the next day. Every day she said, "Ms. Averett, my little brother ate my homework." I had been teaching for only a month, and I had heard myriad excuses from students for not turning in their homework. I thought this excuse was the most ridiculous one yet. It was not until I walked this student to the bus ramp one day that I discovered the truth for myself.

As the student talked with her friends, her five-year-old brother took her homework out of her book bag. The student quickly noticed what her little brother had done and screamed, "Ms. Averett, look! Look! He is eating it!" Seeing was believing. I turned and saw her little brother sitting on the pavement, leaning against a pole, and stuffing his sister's homework into his mouth and eating it.

Shavondra Averett
Fifth-grade teacher
Savannah, Georgia

Got a Story?

E-mail kloschert@nea.org.

RESOURCES

National Board Certification

Be sure to visit the website for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards at www.nbpts.org/. The site includes information on the National Board standards and National Board Certification (NBC). The Candidate Resource Center offers information for new and retake NBC applicants, assessment center dates, portfolio instructions, and payment and scholarship information. The News Center includes relevant articles organized by state. You also can track your progress online and find information on becoming an assessor.

Candidate's Guide

If you're looking for additional information on the National Board Certification process, check out *A Candidate's Guide to National Board Certification 2002-03*, a joint project of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers. The guide, available online at www.nea.org/nationalboard/images/03NBCGuide.pdf, includes tips for staying organized, creating a schedule, understanding the National Board standards, assembling your portfolio, creating your videotapes, and documenting your accomplishments. The guide also includes exercises designed to help you practice the skills you will need to complete the National Board Certification Process. You also will find hints and advice from National Board Certified Teachers.

NBC on the Web

Check out NEA's website on National Board Certification at www.nea.org/nationalboard/. The site includes background information about the history of National Board Certification and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, as well as answers to frequently asked questions, research on the performance and contributions of National Board Certified teachers, and links to other resources. You also will find a list of the various certificates available and the names of NEA members who serve on the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards.

Jump to the Head of the Class

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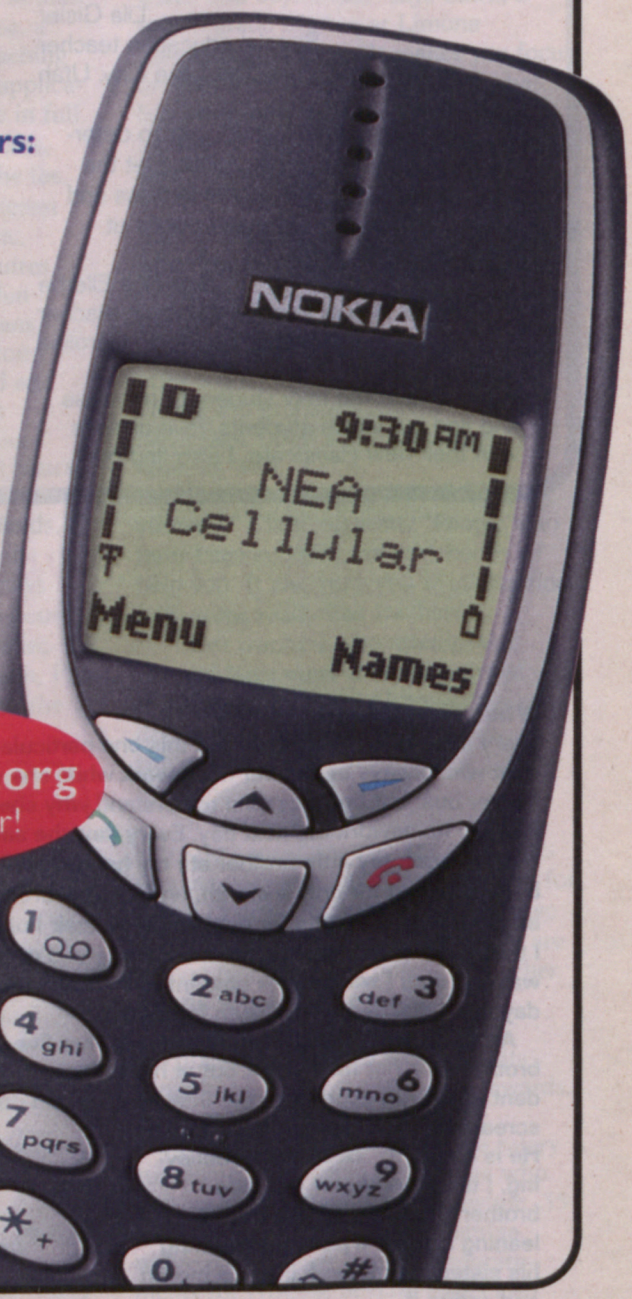

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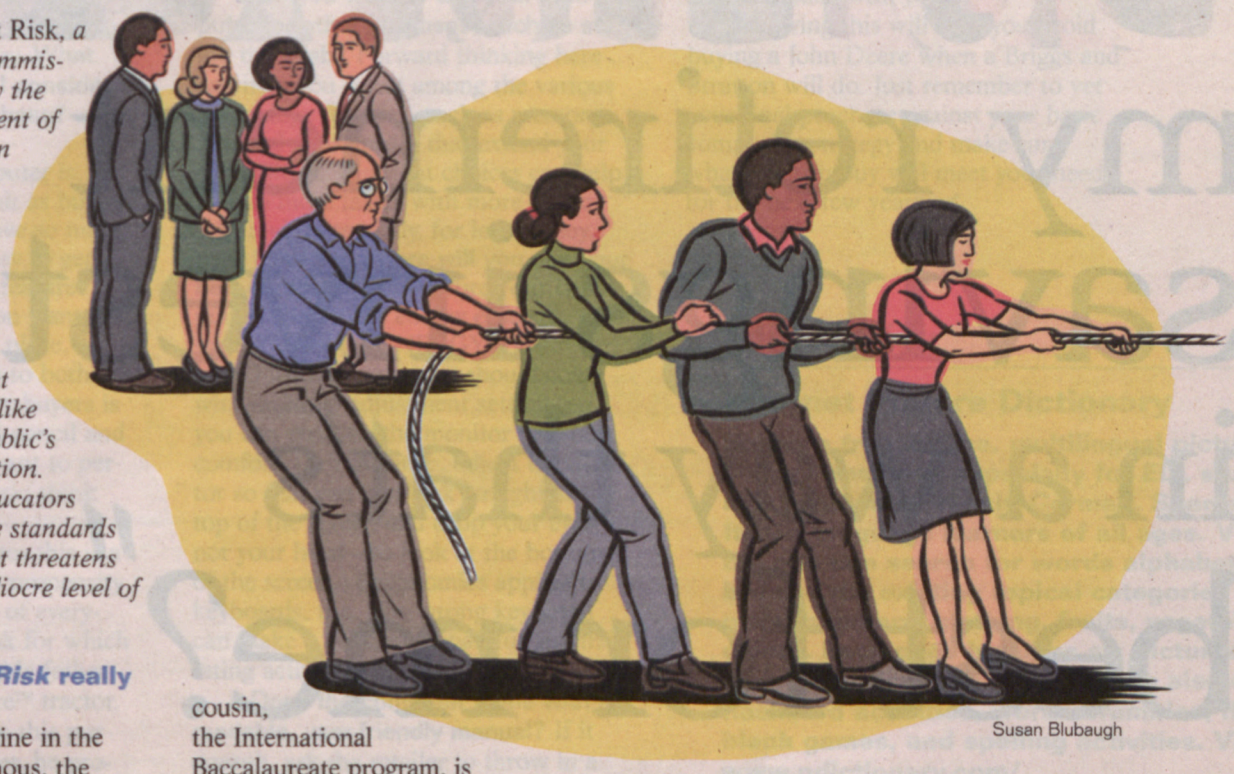
Taking Risks

Educators have more than pulled their weight in the 20 years since *A Nation at Risk* was first published.

A Nation at Risk, a report commissioned by the Department of Education under Ronald Reagan in 1983, claimed that America's public schools were drowning in a "rising tide of mediocrity." The claim was untrue—the proof was right in the report—but it stuck like muck and tarnished the public's perception of public education.

In the 20 years since, educators have continued to raise the standards for quality education. What threatens education today is the mediocre level of support for their efforts.



Susan Blubaugh

What did *A Nation at Risk* really say?

Although the "rising tide" line in the first paragraph became famous, the body of the report didn't back it up. On the contrary, the report said Americans were better educated than ever.

"It is important, of course, to recognize that the *average citizen* today is better educated and more knowledgeable than the average citizen of a generation ago—more literate, and exposed to more mathematics, literature, and science," said the report.

In other words, American high schools were doing something never before accomplished: educating the majority of young people, not just children of the elite.

The authors did state that students had to learn more if America was to maintain its global leadership in an era of technology. But the American students they were so worried about went on to lead the world computer revolution. They were not so poorly prepared after all.

Despite the fact that the situation wasn't as bleak as the report laid out, educators continued to raise the bar for student achievement—and their own professional development.

How has the scene changed for students?

Educators are challenging high school students with much tougher courses. The percentage of students who completed a core academic curriculum of four years of English and three each of mathematics, science, and social studies has quadrupled since 1980.

The number of Advanced Placement tests taken has surged 324 percent, from 50 tests for every 1,000 high school juniors and seniors in 1984, up to 212 tests per 1,000 students in 2002. AP's junior cousin, the International Baccalaureate program, is growing even faster.

What's been done on the professional development front?

Millions of new teachers and support professionals have entered the nation's public schools. Thirty percent left within five years. Surveys show the number one reason teachers leave is lack of support.

NEA has taken the lead in pushing to provide that support and improve professional skills for educators at every point in their careers.

To better prepare student teachers, NEA helped to found and continues to support the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which holds teacher education programs to high standards. NCATE's influence has grown until now, two-thirds of all graduates of teacher preparation programs come from NCATE-accredited schools.

For beginning teachers, NEA locals push their school boards to establish—and fund—quality mentoring programs.

For more experienced teachers, NEA and its affiliates work for relevant, effective professional development. And NEA is a strong supporter of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, whose certification program helps master teachers hone and extend their skills.

What role has the government played in improving public education?

On the plus side, nearly every state has adopted academic standards for students. Educators' unions strongly supported this reform. But on the minus side, governments have not come up with the funding needed to help children reach those standards.

For example, long-term experiments have proved smaller classes significantly improve achievement, but in many states, class size is going up because elected officials feel small classes are too taxing on budgets.

Governments have also failed to help children come to school ready to learn. The Census Bureau reports that as of 2001, 12 percent of children lacked health insurance—and health problems are a barrier to educating students. One-fifth of American children live in poverty, while effective anti-poverty programs are being cut.

Teachers' salaries have not kept pace with the growing prosperity of the nation. After adjusting for inflation, they've gone up only 17 percent since 1983, even though the average teacher today is better educated and has more years of experience than 20 years ago. Not a strong sign that the nation's leaders support quality education.

So what's the key to improving schools in the next 20 years?

Educators will keep trying. But we can't do it alone. We need support from our communities and governments. And it's government's failure to respond that puts our schools and our nation at risk. ✔

—Alain Jehlen

For more:

Visit www.nea.org/goodnews for statistics on education. Go to www.aecf.org/kidscount, the Kids Count site of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, for information on child poverty.

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Variable annuities are long-term investments suitable for retirement investing, and subject to fees, charges and market risks, including loss of principal.

Buying Your First Computer

Dear Web Editor,

I'm planning my first computer purchase and have received lots of advice from many "experts." With each suggestion, I find myself more confused about what to buy. What bells and whistles should I consider for my first computer purchase?

Buying your first computer is, in some ways, as difficult as buying your first car. You have so many choices and options. It's easy to get wrapped up in the various features available and forget why you wanted to buy a computer in the first place.

My first piece of advice to both new and veteran technology buyers is to sit down with a pad and pencil and list the various tasks you want to perform with the technology you think you want to buy.

An analogy that illustrates this is a story about my dad and his propensity to buy the biggest and best of everything—regardless of the task for which a purchase would be used. My father wanted to own a John Deere™ tractor. When he tried to rationalize this purchase to my skeptical mother, he proclaimed that a John Deere "could be used for more than just mowing lawns." My mother pointed out that mowing the lawn was my assigned chore, one that took me 15 minutes with the Briggs and Stratton push mower we already had. Needless to say, we never did get a John Deere.

The point is most of us won't use our computers for complex tasks. You are more likely to make wise purchase decisions if you ask yourself the following basic questions before handing the charge card to the cashier:

- **Why do you want a computer?** The reason often comes from some sort of strategy, such as "I want to keep in touch with my daughter by e-mail when she goes to college next year" or "I want to do my own taxes." Write your reasons on a pad. This will keep you focused when you decide to buy.
- **Do you want to use your computer for other purposes, such as surfing the Web?** Forward thinking here can help you select among the various technology features, such as memory size and CPU speed, that extend your capabilities. The right choices can help you do more faster with more autonomy and, potentially, for less money.
- **How and where will you use your new computer?** Make sure your computer's monitor is energy efficient. (It should carry the ENERGY STAR® label.) The monitor also should come with multiple adjustment settings so you can position the monitor for your comfort. (For instance, adjust the monitor so that you can look straight at the top of the screen and drop your eyes—not your head—to look at the bottom of the screen.) Ergonomics applies to keyboards, too. The wrong keyboard can make computing a painful and irritating activity.
- **Does the computer come with a readable, user-friendly manual?** If it doesn't, ask the retailer to throw in a couple of books from the "For Dummies" series at no extra charge to help you learn how to use your new computer and software or opt for your second choice.
- **Do you really need every bell and whistle available in a type of software?** When choosing between ease of use and power, always go for the technology or software that's easier to use. Just because the salesperson recommends an item doesn't mean you'll be happy with it. Get advice from colleagues who have computing skills comparable to yours or from friends who use their computers for the same tasks you want to accomplish with yours.

Following this will help you avoid buying a John Deere when a Briggs and Stratton will do. Just remember to vet your final purchase against your basic computing strategy and make sure whatever you buy will meet your needs for the next few years. ✔

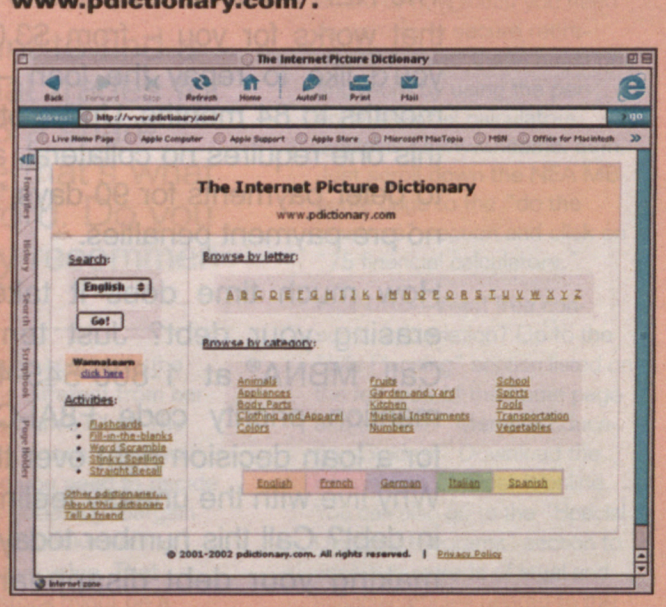
GOT A QUESTION?

Ask the Web editor at webeditor@list.nea.org. Or send your questions by regular mail to *NEA Today* or by fax to 202/822-7206.

Editor's Pick

Internet Picture Dictionary

Here's a free, online, multilingual picture dictionary designed especially for ELL students and beginning French, German, Spanish, and Italian language learners of all ages. Visitors to the site can search for words alphabetically or browse the existing topical categories on animals, numbers, clothing, fruits, vegetables, and colors. Each page includes six pictures and their identifications. The website also offers flashcard activities, word scrambles, fill-in-the-blank games, and spelling activities. Visit www.pdictionary.com/.



OWL Watch

Write for OWL!

What do NEA members Dave Arnold, Marian Galbraith, Patricia Peikoff, and the 25,000 subscribers to Works4Me have in common? Yes, they all are educators. But they also are pioneers building an online community on OWL.org (Our Web Location for Education) by writing articles and columns featured on the new website for NEA members.

Dave Arnold, an elementary school custodian in Illinois, writes "Dave's View," a column that provides unique perspectives on ESP issues and the school workplace.

Marian Galbraith, a middle school language arts teacher and the 2002 Connecticut Teacher of the Year, has two writing partners: ninth graders Torri Jennette and Danté Gonzales. Their contrasting movie reviews in the "Reel to Real" column provide a fresh and interesting look at today's box office attractions.

Patricia Peikoff, who appears on OWL with her favorite pooch, is a secretary to an assistant principal in Illinois. Her articles provide insights about living with pets and cover topics such as choosing a veterinarian and adding new pets to a household.

Meanwhile, the 25,000 Works4Me subscribers, a group of educators from across the country, contribute practical classroom tips and answer educators' questions, which appear weekly on the Works4Me listserv.

NEA members also provide numerous articles on professional topics including teaching experiences, classroom management, mentoring, and professional development.

"Educators helping educators" is the main goal of OWL.org, and many opportunities exist for NEA members to share expertise with colleagues and help build the OWL.org community.

OWL.ORG
OUR WEB LOCATION FOR EDUCATION
A service of the National Education Association and its State and Local Affiliates

If you would like to write for OWL or have an idea for an article you'd like to see, contact OWL Editor-in-Chief Brian Bauer at bbauer@nea.org.

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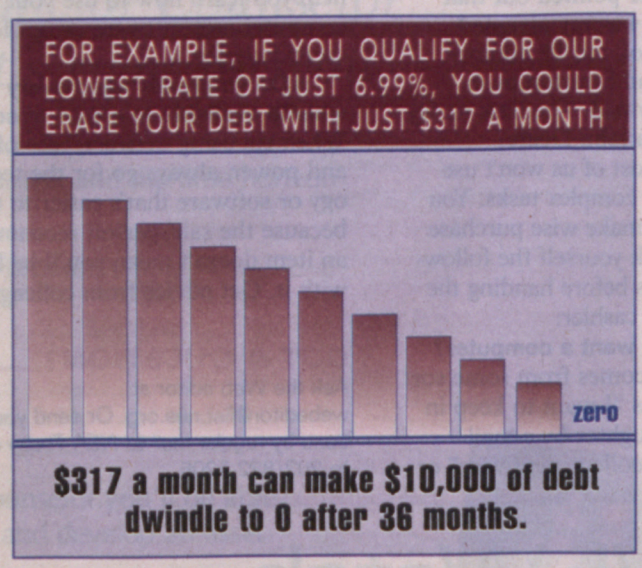
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PLNT0403

College Savings—The Name Game

Q: We want to set up a college savings account for our baby. Should we put the money in her name?

A: Most experts would say no. The most common way of putting college savings in a child's name is with a uniform gift to minor's account or UGMA. When you put money in this account, it becomes the property of the child although, as custodian, you could use it for certain of the child's needs such as private school tuition. You could not use it simply to pay living expenses for your child.

The conventional objection to these trust accounts is that they belong to your child when she reaches the age of majority in your state, and she can do whatever she likes with the money, like buy a Corvette or head for Hawaii.

And there are other negatives. Until your daughter is 14, the earnings on the account are taxed at the parent's highest marginal tax rate, which provides little tax incentive for the trust account. Worse yet, money in the child's name counts against her if she applies for financial aid for college. In fact, I've been looking at colleges with my daughter and most admissions officers tell us that putting money in the child's name drastically reduces your chance of getting financial aid. That's because colleges consider this money in the child's name available to the child for college costs, but recognize that parents have many other obligations. Although I do have UGMA accounts for my children, I don't think I would start one today.

This shouldn't discourage you from starting a savings plan for your daughter, of course. But you're probably better off to earmark it as college funds rather than to put her name on it. The 529 plans offered by various states are worth looking into. Earnings on these plans are free from tax if used for educational purposes. In some states, like New York, you can get a tax deduction for putting money into the plans.

Q: What do you think about using a home equity credit line? My wife is very conservative and afraid to borrow against our home.

A: Your wife is wise to be cautious. I certainly wouldn't borrow money on my home to invest in the stock market or to go on vacation. But a home equity credit line can be a boon if used judiciously. The interest paid on a home equity line is tax deductible up to $100,000 over the amount you originally financed on your home. So if you took out a $150,000 mortgage, you could deduct interest on $250,000 of mortgage and home equity debt combined. I might use a home equity line to borrow money to buy a car or to pay off credit card debt because interest on consumer debt is not tax deductible.

Staying completely out of debt is best, of course. And it's important for your wife to feel comfortable about your finances. But I like the idea of having a home equity line set up for emergency use. I've used mine three times when I got in a pickle and then paid it off as soon as possible.

Q: The company that handles my school district's 403 (b) plans put too much money in my plan. I was permitted to take $10,000 in 2001 and the company withheld $15,000 and deposited it in my 403 (b) account. What should I do?

A: Since your question is somewhat unclear, I am assuming you mean that you contributed $15,000 in 2001, but then found out that the maximum allowable contribution was $10,000 and you are now concerned that you over-contributed. 403 (b) plans do have a "catch up" provision, which allows participants who have contributed less than the maximum amount in earlier years—or who have not contributed at all when they were entitled to—to contribute extra in order to catch up.

Usually, the payroll clerk within each school district handles salary deductions. So, I recommend you talk to your school district office, your accountant or financial representative, and also the company that provides your school district's 403 (b) plan to determine how best to handle the situation.

Q: I want to find a stock that trades for $2 or $3 a share because that's what I can afford. Do you have any recommendations?

A: No. Bargain hunting in the stock market is different from bargain hunting at Sam's Club. The price of a stock doesn't give you the information you need to decide whether it is a good buy. Bargain hunters look for stocks trading below their actual value. That means a $75 stock might be a bargain if the investor decides it's really a $100 stock that has been depressed in price.

Stocks that trade under $5 are referred to as "penny stocks." (The $5 definition is a result of inflation.) Most investors consider penny stocks to be higher risk investments than pricier stocks. For instance, I have some stocks, like Corning and JDS Uniphase that were expensive a few years ago and now trade for a couple bucks. They are priced so low for a reason. The market considers these penny stocks a long shot. They're not a good bet for novice investors. ✔

Mary Rowland is an author and contributor to several financial planning magazines. E-mail your personal finance questions to MoneyQuestions@neamb.com.

Thrifty Educator

This month's tip comes from Tammy Huffman in Castlewood, Virginia.

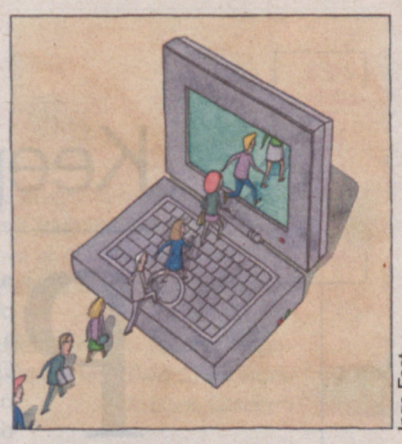
Attention thrifty music teachers! Ever wonder what to do with leftover wrapping paper?

Turn the paper to the white side and use black tape to outline a five-line staff. Add bar lines, but do not include a clef sign, time signature, or notes (students can do that later). Laminate the project and get the washable markers ready!

Children are now ready to create their own melodies and short rhythmic patterns. Laminate several sheets and the students can work in small groups.

Got an idea?

If you have a suggestion for how your colleagues can save money at school, send it along to neatoday@nea.org.



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Get Away—Anytime during the month of April 2003, don't miss your chance to register on www.neamb.com to win a four-day/three-night "Driveaway Getaway" vacation package, good for two adults and up to two children sharing the same room at a deluxe hotel/resort at nearly 200 locations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Bahamas. The package comes with $100 in spending money, a seven-day roadside assistance membership, a Rand McNally pocket road atlas, and a disposable camera. (Transportation not included.)

Get It All at www.neamb.com!

Keep On Running

Paul Shimon has no problem going the distance. Last fall, the physical education teacher from Arkansas City, Kansas, ran his 100th marathon. The 30-year teaching veteran from Adams Elementary School clocked in at 3 hours, 22 minutes, and 9 seconds at the 23rd annual KAKE-TV/Wichita Marathon. "That was a day I will never forget," he says.

Shimon, now 55, ran his first race at age 17 after he saw a group of runners participating in a marathon. The site of their numbers flapping in the wind intrigued him, Shimon says.

Since then, Shimon has run in a variety of races, from the Boston Marathon in Massachusetts to the San Blas Marathon in Puerto Rico, usually completing several each year. Shimon also helped start the Melbourne Marathon in Florida, one of the oldest races in that state.

"I enjoyed every single one of them," Shimon says. "With every race I'm still going for the next one and staying motivated to do my best."

Even with 100 marathons behind him Shimon still runs 8 to 10 miles a day. "I love the feeling of being in motion," he adds. "Running helps me maintain my health and gives me the mental tenacity to do well."

Shimon passes on his healthy habits to his students as the coordinator of the Jump Rope for Heart program, an event that raises money for local charities and helps kids get in shape. He also created a running program for the children at Adams Elementary. "I believe it is important to pass those good habits on to them early," he adds.

With Shimon's steely drive and determination, there's no doubt that his 200th marathon is just around the corner. ✔

—Leah Lakins

Photos by Mike Hutmacher

Dennis Keenon

Finding Inspiration in New Places

NEA-Retired Michigan member **Cleorah Scruggs** often looks for inspiration in the small things in life, a habit gained from 30 years of teaching elementary school.

This morning, her inspiration comes from a picture in her home. It shows three African girls with books stacked on their heads, in their hands, and under their arms.

The picture reminds her of a trip she took to Nigeria, where she learned how a culture so very different from the United States values the same things: education and salvation. Three years later, she's still writing letters and e-mailing notes to her pen pals, several teachers she connected with while visiting a Nigeria orphanage.

Inspired by her experience, Scruggs created the Hookup Connection, a club that allows students to pen pal with someone who is different from them for one year. The pen pal could have a different religious, economic, or cultural background or could be someone with a physical disability. Fifth graders Brianna Newman (left) and Chelsea Miller (right) signed up for the club at the 10th annual National Multicultural Diversity Day, a celebration Scruggs created in 1993. Her diversity work has drawn nationwide recognition (including the May 2001 cover of *This Active Life*, the magazine for NEA-Retired members).

"I believe one person can make a difference," Scruggs says. "These pen pals will relate to each other and see the advantages of positive communication." ✔

—Mary Kershaw

Job of a Lifetime

Can you imagine never missing a day of work for 30 years? Yes, most educators rarely take a day off, but for **Antoine Djerbaka** of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, teaching is a passion that requires his whole heart and perfect attendance every day. And he means *every* day.

"I wake up in the morning and I can't wait to come to school, and on the weekends I can't wait for Monday," he says.

This fourth-grade teacher at Crocker Elementary School has been teaching since August 1973 and he hasn't missed a day yet. Since the beginning of his career Djerbaka, a native of Syria, has taught at four schools in Fitchburg and has educated students in the 3rd to 12th grades in subjects such as algebra, earth science, and biology.

Speed Demon

Greg Serrano isn't Superman, but he knows all about traveling faster than a speeding bullet.

Serrano, an automotive services teacher at Maine West High School in Des Plaines, Illinois, belongs to the Spirit of America team, a crew of determined Americans trying to break the land speed record. Since 1992 the team, led by five-time record holder Craig Breedlove, has worked to build the world's fastest car. When Breedlove attempts his record-breaking drive this summer, the team hopes the car will reach 800 mph, establishing a new land speed record. A British team set the existing record of 766 mph in 1997. Breedlove set his first record, 407 mph, in 1963.

"If you shot a gun at the car, the bullet wouldn't catch it. The car would outrun it," says Serrano.

Serrano, who has idolized Breedlove since his childhood, joined the team in 1999. He initially contacted Breedlove about developing an educational website teachers could use to create lesson plans around the Spirit of America project. Serrano got his website (www.spiritofamericaedu.org) and Breedlove invited him to join the team.

The next year Serrano spent six months in Rio Vistas, California, working on the car's electrical system and handling the team's Web communications. The car even features the Maine West High School logo. Serrano travels to the project site about twice a year now and provides additional support via the Internet.

"When I was in high school in auto classes I used to read about [Breedlove], so it was a thrill when he asked me to come out and help them make history," Serrano says. "What I love about the project is it's a group of 12 of us and you do anything that needs to be done. It is 100 percent commitment from the team.

"I tell my students, when I sat in those desks reading a hot rod magazine about this car, never in my wildest dreams did I think I would be working on this project." ✔

—Kristen Loschert

Matt Ferguson

GOT A TIP?

Do you have an interesting story idea? Contact Kristen Loschert, section editor, at kloschert@nea.org.

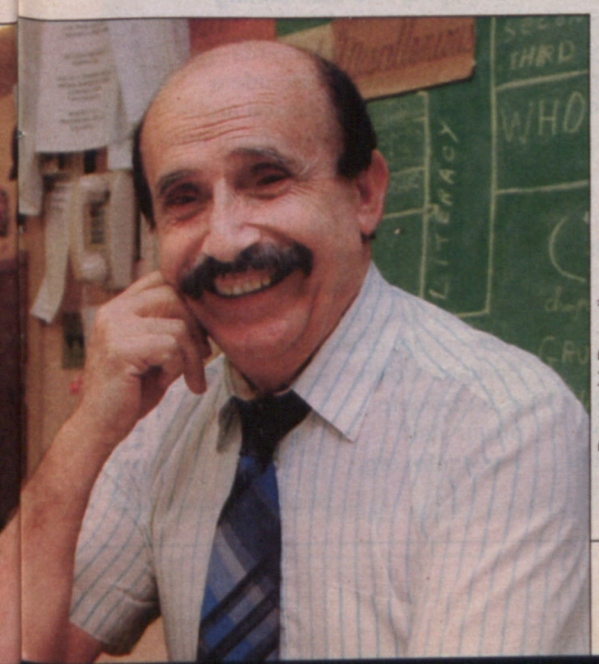
"Teaching is rewarding for me, and I find it very important to do whatever it takes to help the students improve," he says.

In addition to his marathon career, Djerbaka tutors students for standardized tests, organizes clothing drives for needy kids, and coordinates a program for local judges to read to his students.

What keeps him going? "I'm addicted to jogging, and I love to help single mothers," Djerbaka says. "When I see them struggling with their children I know I have to do my best to make a difference."

Even with 30 stellar years of teaching behind him, Djerbaka has no plans of slowing down. "I'm doing what makes me happy. And I'm not even thinking about retirement until they push me out the door." ✔

—Leah Lakins



Patricia McDonnell

Cuddle Up

What parent doesn't wax nostalgic about the bliss of cuddling a newborn infant? Let's face it, only the sweet murmur of a sleeping baby gets you through the night feedings and foul-smelling diaper deposits. NEA-Retired Arizona member **John Campbell** isn't a new dad, but he's head-over-heels in love with his volunteer assignment as a "cuddler" of premature infants born at the Thunderbird Samaritan Medical Center in Glendale.

"It's heaven," says Campbell, now in his third year as president of the Arizona Education Association-Retired. "The cuddlers, the nurses, and the babies all benefit from the program."

Under the supervision of a developmental nurse specialist, the volunteers cuddle newborns who are premature or face other issues, such as absent parents or a drug addiction.

"The human touch and the rocking is very beneficial to the babies," Campbell says. "They're often cranky, and when you rock them, that quiets them right down." Campbell is a volunteer cuddler once a week for four hours, also volunteering at an information desk at the hospital another four hours per week.

After being trained, Campbell's first assignment was to cuddle Brandon, who was born three months premature and weighed just two pounds. "I had a thought that maybe I can't do this," he confesses. But Brandon gradually made strides and was ready to go home when he reached four-and-a-half pounds.

Campbell says he also leaves the hospital feeling better. "I've had two heart attacks, and when I'm quietly cuddling a child it brings my blood pressure down and I'm much calmer. I told one of the nurses that maybe [cuddling] should be part of heart attack rehabilitation!" ✔

—John O'Neil

Shana Partl/TSMC

The Birds, the Bees, Oh My!

Abstinence-only programs have restricted sex education talk in many districts, but educators can still play a role in helping kids make healthy choices.

As health educators go, many people might say Julie Colwell has it made. A veteran teacher at Evanston Township High School in Evanston, Illinois, Colwell plies her trade in a district that embraces a comprehensive approach to sex education. So every day, in a classroom environment where respect and discretion rule, she gets to field all sorts of sex-related questions from her students. And they are plentiful: Colwell says she could write a book about all the curious queries she's gotten in the 20 years she's been doing her work.

Michael Carroll/Artville

This is no puzzle, Colwell notes. Students want—and need—to know accurate answers to the plethora of questions that swirl around topics like sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy, and AIDS. Some 60 percent of American 12th graders now report they've had sex, and Colwell, like educators nationwide, say classes like hers help students sort through the maze of misinformation about these subjects.

But if Colwell is feeling upbeat about giving students the tools they need to make medically safe and healthy choices, her colleagues in other parts of the country are feeling hamstrung. That's because some 23 percent of U.S. school districts have adopted policies that require a focused message about sexual activity: Forget about it until marriage.

Lured by more than $100 million in federal funds to schools and community groups, states adopting these programs are bound by strict rules prohibiting any discussion of contraception or AIDS prevention. The central message, according to the statute, must be that sexual activity outside marriage is not proper and is "likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects."

NEA, along with scores of medical experts and public health organizations, has long promoted an approach that embraces the teaching of both abstinence and potentially life-saving information about contraception. Educators on the frontlines say every day they go to school they witness why.

Janet Lomonico, a health teacher at J.P. Stevens High School in Edison, New Jersey, says even students who firmly declare they want to remain virgins until marriage are "hungry for knowledge to make healthy, self-protective decisions." She notes that teaching abstinence until marriage ignores the circumstances of gays and lesbians, who cannot legally marry in this country.

Lomonico adds that it's just not the students, but parents, who are grateful for the information she serves up. "At parent conferences, they always want to stay and talk more about this," she says. And national polls bear it out. According to recent surveys, 8 in 10 parents want schools to teach their children how to use contraception and how to negotiate contraceptive use with future partners.

What's troubling, says Jerald Newberry, executive director of the NEA Health Information Network, is that many parents in districts where abstinence-only policies have been adopted aren't even aware of the change. "They don't realize that schools are not giving their children information on how to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies," he says.

Despite that, students should not have to go hungry for guidance, he says. Educators can play a role in helping students make wise choices. Newberry offers these tips for navigating the sensitive topic:

- Be aware of the sex education curriculum taught in your school, as well as the regulations in your district around what can and can't be discussed, by whom, at each grade level.
- Encourage students to become involved in community events related to AIDS awareness or STD or teen pregnancy prevention. (NEA is partnering with the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy on their May 7th National Day to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Visit www.teenpregnancy.org for ideas on how to promote the day in your community.)
- Connect young people with positive, caring adult role models who can be sounding boards and offer wise supports.
- If you're in an abstinence-only district, consider lobbying for use of abstinence-only funds for after-school community programs, so that schools can be free to teach a more comprehensive program.
- Learn about appropriate, accurate resources that could help your students. Start by visiting www.cdc.gov and click on "Health Topics A-Z" for reliable information on a variety of sex education topics. ✔

—Kandra Strauss
NEA Health Information Network

FOR MORE: Visit HIN's website at www.neahin.org and the website of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States at www.siecus.org.

What's Up at HIN? NEA Health Information Network

WORKING TO BREATHE BETTER
Mark your calendars: May 6, 2003, is World Asthma Day. HIN is joining with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and other federal and nonprofit organizations to sponsor asthma education events around the country. The goal is to raise awareness about the indoor and outdoor pollutants that trigger asthma episodes and how to avoid them.

Join HIN and the EPA by sponsoring an asthma awareness program to reduce indoor asthma triggers in homes and schools in your community. To find out how your school or local Association can sponsor an event, contact Jennie Young at jyoung@nea.org or 202/822-7481. For a free copy of EPA's World Asthma Day Event Planning Kit, call 800/438-4318 or log on to www.epa.gov/asthma. Working together, we can help families take control of asthma.

PARENT EDUCATION WEBSITE
Visit HIN's re-designed parent-child communication website www.canwetalk.org! Can We Talk? is a parent education program that helps bridge the gap that often exists among schools, parents, and children around difficult topics. The program is organized into four modules: Self Esteem, Puberty and Sexuality, Mixed Messages, and Peer Pressure. Log onto the website today to see its new look and learn more about the program.

SCHOOL BUILDING DAY 2003
HIN is promoting "School Building Day 2003" on April 11. Sponsored by the Council for Educational Facility Planners International (CEFPI), this national event seeks to heighten awareness about facility problems facing our nation's schools and to highlight the benefits of developing and maintaining healthy, high performing, nurturing learning environments. The national event will include a Washington, D.C.-based architectural competition among middle and junior high school students, who will create what they believe are ideal learning spaces. For more information or to find out how you can host a "School Building Day" event in your school or district, contact Barbara Worth at barb@cefpi.org or visit www.cefpi.org.

The Wonders of H_2O

Drink it up, soak in it, splash it on—whatever you do, good ol' water almost always gives you a therapeutic treat.

Craig Smallish/Artville

You've long known that drinking 8-10 glasses of water a day is good for you, but do you really know why? Water, it turns out, is a healing wonder. Not only does it keep you alive, it can actually help cure. And while doing a "bottoms-up" routine throughout the day may be the most familiar route to therapeutic bliss, actually immersing yourself in water can have a remarkable impact, too.

As spring kicks into full gear, we tapped the experts for some advice on how to use water more effectively—and aggressively. Ready to flush the aches and pains?

Wide World of Water Sports

Don't cringe. Even if you're aquaphobic, water sports may be the answer to your fitness quandary. Yes, there's swimming and diving, but in this new age of aquatic sports, they're just the tip of the iceberg.

"You can do just about any sport in the water," says Julie See, president of the Aquatic Exercise Association. "Water sports give you more buoyancy, reduces stress on the joints, and can give you the same results as regular aerobic activity." Water fitness programs, she says, have really advanced in the last few years. Forget about little old ladies bouncing around in a weekday class. Now there's water kickboxing, tai chi, yoga, stretching, and circuit training.

Some of these sports, says See, are actually more beneficial underwater, because water adds extra resistance, helps build muscle, and provides a higher intensity workout. Water also keeps you cooler, allows a free range of motion, and can be performed five days a week. Older people and arthritis sufferers can benefit particularly, as water relieves pain and reduces gravitational pull on the joints.

The good news for novices: Water exercises can be performed at any level and can help you burn up to 300 calories per hour. But See advises anyone performing aquatic exercise to learn how to swim and to practice water safety. "Always exercise with someone else, stay hydrated, and be careful of sun exposure," she says.

The Comfort Zone

After you've gotten a few good kicks, try a soak. Water is a relaxing way to alleviate stress and rejuvenate your body. Hydrotherapy treatments of all sorts invigorate the body by stimulating the lymphatic system to rid the body of toxins. Popular treatments include hydrotherapy baths, aromatherapy, and steam baths.

For ultimate relaxation, try a nice warm bath with Epsom salts and a few drops of essential oils. Not a bath person? Spend a few extra moments and make your shower a steamy retreat. The humidity opens pores and helps the body detoxification process.

Guzzling for Good Health

Just when you'd given up trying to gulp down eight glasses, consider these great reasons to keep a tumbler of water at your side. First, water is essential to maintaining metabolism, aiding digestion, ridding the body of wastes, regulating temperature, flushing the kidneys, and supporting the muscles, according to Wanda Brown, NEA's wellness coordinator. In addition to keeping the body moving, water prevents kidney stones, ulcers, gallstones, and other harmful toxins from taking root in the body.

Need help losing weight? Drinking a glass of water before a meal can suppress the appetite. Joint pains? Adding extra water after a workout can help lubricate aching muscles. Blotchy looking skin? Drink up bigtime; water does wonders for skin texture. ✔

—Leah Lakins

Water 101

Not a fan? Getting in your 8-10 glasses is not as hard as you think. Here are some tips for getting it down with ease.

Use a big glass—consider a pint size—so you'll only need to drink six to seven of them a day.

Start before breakfast to meet your goal. Guzzle two while brushing your teeth, for instance.

Throw in an extra glass for every glass of caffeinated beverage you drink; coffee, tea, and sodas are dehydrating.

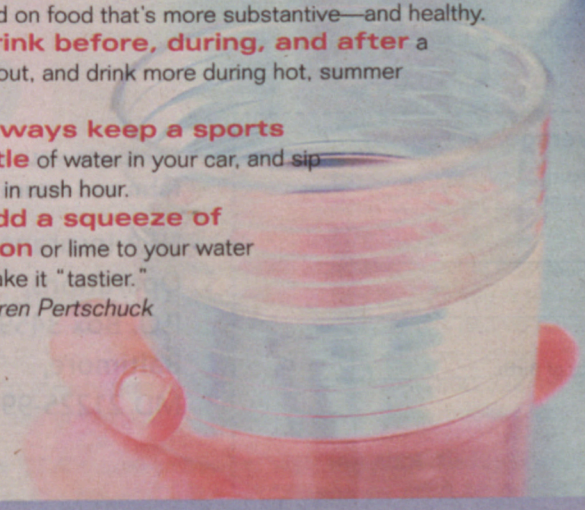
Replace some of those sugary beverages with water. It's a great way to "earn" extra calories to spend on food that's more substantive—and healthy.

Drink before, during, and after a workout, and drink more during hot, summer days.

Always keep a sports bottle of water in your car, and sip while in rush hour.

Add a squeeze of lemon or lime to your water to make it "tastier."

—Karen Pertschuck



Photomondo/Photodisc

HEALTHY BITES

BROWN BAGGIN' IT

How 'bout a Waldorf chicken salad with a flair? This one builds on the traditional version made with apples, grapes, celery, and walnuts.

For one serving: Toss one half cup of chopped, cooked chicken with one teaspoon of walnut or olive oil. (Time saving tip: you can order roasted or smoked chicken breast "thick sliced" from the deli, and then chop yourself.)

Chop one apple and toss with a teaspoon of sherry vinegar or lemon juice to prevent browning. Add a tablespoon of chopped walnuts (packed with special, healthful oils); a few seedless red grapes, quartered; and chopped celery, if you wish.

Mix ingredients, place on crisp lettuce leaves in your container, and keep chilled until lunch. Try it on whole grain bread or by itself. It goes well with an orange or banana, and, of course, a bottle of water.

GOOD QUESTION!

Q: I heard about a connection between gum disease and heart disease. Is this true?

A: According to the American Academy of Periodontology, several theories have been projected to explain this supposed link. One theory is that oral bacteria can affect the heart upon entering the blood stream, attach to the coronary arteries, and cause blood clots. Another possibility is that inflammation from periodontal disease may contribute to swelling of the arteries.

While these theories are still under speculation, you can avoid these problems all together just by making sure you brush and floss your teeth twice daily.

TALK TO US

This is the sixth in a series of articles designed to help NEA members develop healthy habits that tackle stress and overeating. Questions or comments: e-mail mmilloy@nea.org.

Here's the lowdown on

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❑ Domestic Partner: _____ (First Name / M.I. / Last Name) Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Children's Year of Birth: 1st Child _____ 2nd Child _____ 3rd Child _____ 4th Child _____

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If beneficiary is not named, any amount of insurance at your death will be paid to the first surviving beneficiary class as listed in the following order: 1. Spouse 2. Children 3. Parents 4. Your Estate. To name more than one beneficiary, call the toll-free number above.

DTNT0403

Complete your enrollment form and return to:

NEA Insurance
Operations,
P.O. Box 3459
Baltimore,
MD 21225-9931

*Active, Staff, Reserve, and Life members. Retired members are eligible for $50,000 accident insurance while serving on the job or as an Association leader.

The 'Teacher Gap'

The most highly qualified teachers are not serving the students who need them most.

QUALITY COUNTS 2003. "IF I CAN'T LEARN FROM YOU..." ENSURING A HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER FOR EVERY CLASSROOM

By **Education Week**

182 pp. $10 paperback; Education Week (www.edweek.org). Available online at www.edweek.org/sreports/QC03/.

To end the achievement gap between groups of students, we must first end the teacher gap—the lack of well-qualified teachers for those students who need them most. That's the major conclusion of this new report from *Education Week* (*EW*).

EW's annual "Quality Counts" publication reports on various indicators of what it takes to create and maintain quality public education. Although the report's emphasis changes annually, each one grades every state on how it is faring on various quality indicators. This is especially important now that states are trying to implement the new Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

This year's report delivers troubling news. Nearly a quarter of secondary school students (22 percent) take at least one class with a teacher who did not even have a minor in the subject he or she teaches. In high-poverty secondary schools, that figure jumps to 32 percent. Almost half of middle school students nationwide (44 percent), and over half in high-poverty middle schools, take a class with a teacher who lacks even a minor in the subject.

State licensing requirements, while intended to assure the public that teachers are indeed qualified to teach, are frequently bypassed by alternative routes and other "emergency" measures that allow unqualified people into classrooms. The teacher gap in this area is astounding. About 70 percent of secondary students in low-poverty schools benefit from teachers who have both majored and are fully licensed in their subjects. Only about half of secondary students in high-poverty schools enjoy the same benefit.

The report points out the wide variation in requirements for teacher preparation. Some states require that new teachers receive intensive training (whether alternative or traditional), student teaching, and structured mentoring and induction programs. Other states require little more than a college degree in a subject area and four to six weeks of "basic training."

In addition to data on student achievement, "Quality Counts" provides a road map for improving the quality of teaching. By offering the percentage of teachers prepared in a program accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, as well as information on states that offer salary enhancements for advanced certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the report highlights positive policies and practices from states committed to quality teaching.

"Quality Counts" provides critical data useful for NEA and other groups supporting a quality teaching profession. (For more, see "NEA's Agenda for Teacher Quality" below.) Only by documenting the extent of the teacher gap will we be able to better understand and address it.

—Tim Dedman
NEA Department of Teacher Quality

NEA's Agenda for Teacher Quality

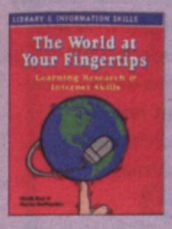
NEA has developed a comprehensive agenda that will lead to a quality teaching profession and a diverse teacher workforce. Some highlights:

- Develop recruitment strategies that will lead talented students to choose teaching as a career, particularly minority students;
- Ensure quality teacher preparation by requiring all teacher preparation programs (whether traditional or alternative) to be accredited by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education. Require quality field-based pre-training components such as professional development schools and supervised internships;
- Develop support systems to help underrepresented groups meet high quality standards. Remove artificial barriers where they exist;
- Establish teacher-majority licensing boards in each state, and require consistent measures of quality based on licensing standards for both beginning and experienced teachers. Require all teachers to be fully licensed;
- Develop high-quality induction and mentoring programs to provide all new teachers a successful transition into the classroom;
- Provide high-quality, sustained, teacher-directed professional development;
- Establish incentives and support for pursuing advanced certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards;
- Focus on retaining teachers in the classroom with a career that is rewarding both professionally and financially.

BOOKS by NEA Members

The World at Your Fingertips: Learning Research & Internet Skills

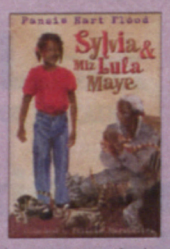
By Heidi Kay and Karen Delvecchio



Help students navigate everything from encyclopedias and atlases to online search engines and websites. Written by teachers for grades 1-6, the book's activities and lessons teach students to use a variety of research methods and techniques. Each chapter features one continent and offers new and interesting ways to approach research skills. 72 pp. $15.95 from UpstartBooks. To order, go to www.hpress.highsmith.com/skils.htm or call 800/448-4887.

Sylvia & Miz Lula Maye

By Pansie Hart Flood



This book tells the tale of sassy, 10-year-old Sylvia Freeman, who moves to South Carolina in 1978, sure that her summer is going to be boring, until she meets her 99-year-old neighbor, Miz Lula Maye. Everything seems an adventure with Miz Lula Maye involved, and the two quickly become friends. Written by a teacher, the tale is told in Sylvia's voice and is geared for grades 3-6. $15.95 from Carolrhoda books. To order, call 800/328-4929 or visit www.lernerbooks.com.

Understanding Buddy

By Marc Kornblatt

Two boys' friendship across social class and religion are at the heart of this novel, written for ages 8-12. Sam is shocked when his family's housekeeper, Laura, is killed in an accident. Then Laura's son, Buddy, shows up as the new boy in Sam's class. Buddy won't talk with anyone, but as the boys spend time together, he comes out of his shell and helps Sam understand what it means to lose someone you love. 128 pp. $16 from McElderry Books. To order, go to www.simonsays.com.

Bent's Fort: Crossroads of Cultures on the Santa Fe Trail

By Melvin Bacon and Daniel Blegen

Using firsthand descriptions from the diaries of visitors and from their own personal accounts, the authors highlight the life of an important trading center, Bent's Fort, on the Santa Fe Trail, where U.S., Mexican, and Indian cultures mingled at a key time in American history. Photographer and author, Mel Bacon has won many teaching awards, and poet and playwright Dan Blegen has been teaching for almost 30 years. 71 pp. from Filter Press. $12.95 plus s&h. To order, call 888/570-2663.

For more NEA member books, visit the NEA Today website at www.nea.org/neatoday and click on "Books by NEA Members Online."

TVTIPS

TV Tips are provided by KIDSNET, a national resource for children's media in Washington, D.C., www.kidsnet.org, and from Cable in the Classroom at www.ciconline.org.

SportsFigures

ESPN2, April 6, 13, 20, 27, 5:30 a.m., ET.

Designed for middle- and high-school students, this series features professional athletes who help demonstrate math and physics concepts through sports. A sampling of this month's episodes include: "Terminal Velocity/The Spin Doctor Is In," which discusses the laws of physics and acceleration with street luger Darren Lott and figure skater Sasha Cohen (airs April 6); and "Elastic Racquet/In Golf Gravitas," in which tennis player Chanda Rubin explores elastic energy and golfer Brad Faxon discusses various principles of energy (airs April 20). Episodes can be taped and used in the classroom with teaching materials from http://sportsfigures. espn.com.

Miffy and Friends

NOGGIN, April 7, 7 a.m. and 10:30 a.m., ET, check local listings.

Leading off the new commercial-free preschool block on Noggin, "Miffy and Friends" helps children learn early math by means of gentle story and song. Miffy, a smart bunny that sees the world through the eyes of a four-year-old, is based on the award-winning book series by Dutch artist, Dick Bruna. Animated "Miffy" tales are woven together with original games to help preschoolers appreciate math relationships in their everyday world.

TLC Elementary School—Conquest of the Americas

The Learning Channel, April 11, 6 a.m., ET.

This series, designed for grades K-6, consists of segments edited from original documentaries. "The Aztecs" episode examines the downfall of the Aztec and Inca empires of ancient Mexico and Peru, explaining how Hernán Cortés destroyed in three months the empire the Aztecs took years to create. "Cortés" shows how one man's pursuit of fame and fortune led to the collapse of a powerful empire. "Pizarro" demonstrates how the Inca's civil war made it possible for an illiterate soldier with a minuscule army to conquer an empire. Can be taped and used in the classroom for two years. Find teaching materials at http://school.discovery.com.

Nick Jones/DCI

Avoiding Armageddon

PBS, April 14-17, check local listings.

This documentary takes an unflinching look at the nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons that could destroy civilization and the people who are racing to use them. Despite the magnitude of the threat, the series delivers the conclusion that not just governments—but individuals—can help the world avoid Armageddon.

Ice Bound

CBS, April 20, 9 p.m., ET, check local listings.

This two-hour television movie starring Susan Sarandon, tells the harrowing true story of Dr. Jerri Nielsen, the physician stranded at a South Pole research station that diagnosed and treated her own breast cancer. A website about Antarctica, created by personnel at Nielsen's station, can be

NEA Life Insurance Benefit Changes

Conforming to the Department of Labor Reg. §2520.104b-3, the following material modifications are made to the **NEA Life Insurance Plan**, which includes the following programs: the **NEA AD&D Insurance Plan, the NEA AD&D Plus Insurance Plan,** the **NEA Decreasing Term Life Plan,** the **NEA Guaranteed Issue Life Plan,** the **NEA Home Protection® Plan**, the **NEA Level Premium Term Life Insurance Plan,** and the **A, B, C, C+, IE, S, W, Z Plans.**

BENEFICIARY RULES

Effective January 1, 2003, the following paragraph is added:

Any amount of the insurance for which there is no disposition of a terminated interest as provided above, and any other amount of the insurance for which there is no Beneficiary at the death of the Member will be payable to the first surviving class of the following classes of successive preference beneficiaries: the Member's (a) surviving spouse; (b) surviving child(ren) in equal shares; (c) surviving parents in equal shares; (d) surviving siblings in equal shares; (e) estate unless otherwise provided in the Assignment Limitations.

When Your Insurance Ends: MEMBER INSURANCE

Effective January 1, 2003, the following paragraph is added:

If at any time it is determined that a contribution has been made and Coverage continued after the date an individual ceased to be included in the classes of Members eligible for the insurance described in this Certificate, due to failure on the part of the individual to report to the Insurance Company such cessation of eligibility, such individual's insurance will be considered to terminate as of the most recent premium due date on which a contribution was made and an amount equal to such contribution shall be refunded to the individual, unless benefits have otherwise become payable under the coverage.

CLAIMS

Initial Procedures. If there is a claim for any benefit under the Plan, you or your Beneficiary should notify NEA Insurance Operations, Post Office Box 1737, Des Moines, Iowa 50306-1737. The appropriate claim forms will be sent by return mail accompanied by complete claim instructions. If the claim results from death, a certified copy of the death certificate will be required. If the claim results from total disability, you will be sent a form which must be completed by your physician.

You are entitled to receive written notice, within 90 days of filing your claim for benefits, whether the claim is to be allowed in full or in part. The insurance company reserves the right to extend this 90-day period for a single time up to an additional 90 days if it determines that special circumstances require an extension of time for processing your claim, and notifies you prior to the termination of the initial 90-day period.

Review of Denied Claims. If a claim for benefits is denied or ignored, in whole or in part, you are entitled to have your claim reviewed by Prudential. You or your authorized representative will receive a written explanation of the reason for the denial. Prudential will send this written notice to you within 90 days. If you are not notified at all within 90 days, this may be considered a claim denial. You then have the right to have Prudential review and reconsider your claim. In order to initiate a review of that claim decision, you must make written request to Prudential. You may take certain steps to enforce your right to this review process. You may file suit in a state court, or you may file suit in a federal court. The court will decide who should pay court costs and legal fees. You can obtain further information regarding this review procedure from NEA Member Benefits.

After receiving a denial of your claim, you must submit, within 60 days, a written request for reconsideration of the claim. Your request should be accompanied by documents or records in support of your appeal. As part of the review procedure, you are entitled to: examine and obtain copies, free of charge, of all Plan documents, records and other information that affect your claim; submit written comments, documents, records, and other information relating to your claim; and information identifying the medical or vocational experts whose advice was obtained on behalf of the Plan in connection with the denial of your claim. (You are entitled to this information even if the Plan did not rely on the information in denying your appeal.) You also are entitled to have someone act as your representative in the review procedure, if you wish.

The insurance company will notify you of its decision on your appeal. Such notice will be provided to you within a reasonable period of time, but not later than 60 days after the receipt of your appeal of a claim. The insurance company reserves the right to extend this 60-day period a single time for up to an additional 60 days if it determines that special circumstances require an extension of time for processing the claim, and notifies you prior to the expiration of the initial 60-day period, of the circumstances requiring an extension of time and the date by which Prudential expects to render a decision on your appeal.

If your appeal is denied, a written notice containing the information set forth below will be provided to you: the specific reason or reasons for the denial of your appeal; reference to the specific Plan provisions on which the denial is based; a statement that you are entitled to receive, upon request and free of charge, access to, and copies of, all documents, records, and other information relevant to your claim for benefits; and a statement explaining your right to bring a civil action under Section 502(a) of ERISA following the denial of your claim on appeal.

NEA Health and Disability Insurance Benefit Changes

Conforming to the Department of Labor Reg. §2520.104b-3, the following material modifications are made to the **NEA Income Protection Plan,** the **NEA MemberCare® Critical Illness Benefit,** the **NEA MemberCare® In-Hospital Plan,** the **NEA MemberCare® Long-Term Care Insurance Program,** the **NEA MemberCare® Major Medical Plan,** and the **NEA MemberCare® Medicare Supplement Program.**

CLAIMS

Initial Procedures. If there is a claim for any benefit under the Plan, you should notify the Program Administrator at the address indicated on your Data Page. The appropriate claim forms will be sent by return mail accompanied by complete claim instructions. Further information on filing of claims can be found earlier in this document under "When There Is A Claim."

You are entitled to receive written notice, within 90 days of filing your claim for benefits, whether the claim is to be allowed in full or in part. The insurance company reserves the right to extend this 90-day period for a single time up to an additional 90 days if it determines that special circumstances require an extension of time for processing your claim, and notifies you prior to the termination of the initial 90-day period.

Review of Denied Claims. If a claim for benefits is denied or ignored, in whole or in part, you are entitled to have your claim reviewed by the Program Administrator. You or your authorized representative will receive a written explanation of the reason for the denial. The Program Administrator will send this written notice to you within 90 days. If you are not notified at all within 90 days, this may be considered a claim denial. You then have the right to have the Program Administrator review and reconsider your claim. In order to initiate a review of that claim decision, you must make written request to the Program Administrator. You may take certain steps to enforce your right to this review process. You may file suit in a state court, or you may file suit in a federal court. The court will decide who should pay court costs and legal fees.

After receiving a denial of your claim, you must submit, within 60 days, a written request for reconsideration of the claim. Your request should be accompanied by documents or records in support of your appeal. As part of the review procedure, you are entitled to: examine and obtain copies, free of charge, of all Plan documents, records and other information that affect your claim; submit written comments, documents, records, and other information relating to your claim; and information identifying the medical or vocational experts whose advice was obtained on behalf of the Plan in connection with the denial of your claim. (You are entitled to this information even if the Plan did not rely on the information in denying your appeal.) You also are entitled to have someone act as your representative in the review procedure, if you wish.

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If your appeal is denied, a written notice containing the information set forth below will be provided to you: the specific reason or reasons for the denial of your appeal; reference to the specific Plan provisions on which the denial is based; a statement that you are entitled to receive, upon request and free of charge, access to, and copies of, all documents, records, and other information relevant to your claim for benefits; and a statement explaining your right to bring a civil action under Section 502(a) of ERISA following the denial of your claim on appeal.

nea Member Benefits

accessed at http://205.174.118.254/nspt/teach/teach.htm.

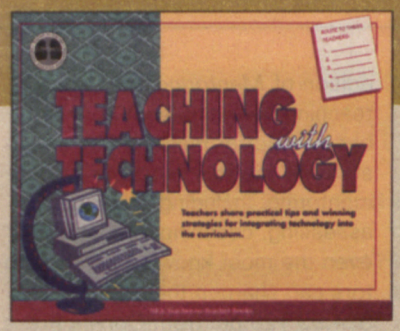
Surviving Everest
National Geographic Channel, April 27, 8 p.m., ET.
This two-hour special covers the National Geographic 50th Anniversary Everest Expedition that united Peter Hillary, Jamling Tenzing Norgay, and Brent Bishop—the sons of Sir Edmund Hillary, Tensing Norgay Sherpa, and Dr. Barry Bishop. The program takes an in-depth look at 50 years of tragedy and triumph, including early Everest expeditions and the bitter rivalries to summit the mountain. Following the same routes pioneered by their fathers, this expedition attempts a perilous double-route ascent to meet at the top.

Chris Tait ©NGC

Great Books
Discovery Channel, April 29, 9:30 a.m., ET, check local listings.
This Emmy Award-winning series examines the enduring quality and continuing influence of select literary works. This episode, "Wuthering Heights," examines the parallels between the life of reclusive English author Emily Brontë and her saga of thwarted passion and cruelty. Can be taped and used in the classroom for one year with teaching materials available at http://school.discovery.com.

Amandla!
HBO, April, check local listings.
This soul-stirring documentary uses exclusive interviews, new recordings and rare archival film footage to examine the vital role that music played in the nearly half-century struggle against apartheid in South Africa. The production, which took nine years to make, is a testimony to the power of song, and its ability to fuel the struggle for freedom. Woven together are many previously unrecorded songs of liberation into a fabric of newsreel footage of historic speeches, and organized rallies.

From the NEA Professional Library



Teaching with Technology Teacher-to-Teacher Series
96 pp. $9.95 NEA members
$12.95 nonmembers
#2915-1-00-FN

In a world where schools are wired and students surf the Net with ease, teachers need to know that it's not enough for kids to be computer literate; they also need to be information literate. *Teaching with Technology* helps educators shift their focus from teaching about technology to integrating technology as a learning tool for core subjects. Classroom and computer resource teachers, along with library/media specialists, share their strategies for revamping instruction and helping students develop the critical thinking and interpersonal skills they need to become better learners.

To order, call 800/229-4200, or check the Web at www.nea.org/books

EXCERPT

Technology is a recurrent theme at the Roosevelt-Perry Elementary School. We use it to enhance curriculum and manage the business of teaching. During school hours, students use technology in every classroom to augment everyday learning. After school hours, we offer technology in-services to teachers, who earn professional development credit by participating. And we just launched a Wednesday afternoon computer class for parents.

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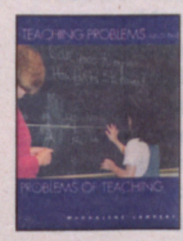
FREE OR INEXPENSIVE

On Being a Mentor

Veteran teachers can really make an impact on new teachers by being a guide, a friend, and someone to swap battle stories with. In Hal Portner's updated edition of *Mentoring Teachers*, teaching vets can learn how to become better mentors. By understanding the four functions of mentoring, including relating, assessing, coaching, and guiding, even the most knowledgeable mentors can sharpen their skills. $24.95 120 pp. from Corwin Press. To order, visit www.corwinpress.com or call 800/818-7243.

Empower Girl Athletes

Jackie Stiles, professional basketball player for the Portland Fire, always loved basketball. As a child, she quickly grasped the fundamentals from tagging along with her father to the practices he ran for her hometown high school's basketball team. Her talent and drive helped her to make it big in college and eventually the WNBA. In Mark Stewart's *Jackie Stiles: Gym Dandy*, athletes in grades 4 and higher can follow Stiles' rise to the top. 48 pp. $23.90 from Millbrook Press. To order call, 800/462-4703 or visit online at www.millbrookpress.com.



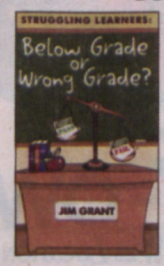
What's the Problem?

Visit author Magdalene Lampert's fifth-grade math class during one year in *Teaching Problems and the Problems of Teaching*. A researcher and classroom veteran, Lampert explains how to help students think logically and express their thoughts clearly. She provides examples of problems she has given her class and examples of actual student work, analyzing their logic. Lampert's voice is easy-to-read and engaging, making readers feel like active participants in her class. 496 pp. $35 from Yale University Press. To order, visit www.yalebooks.com or call 800/405-1619.

Classical Music for Kids

Looking for an uplifting CD for your classroom? You can help children develop their music appreciation with Robert Lawson's *Classical Music for Children: The Kids Collection of Greatest Classics, Vol. 13*. Introduce kids to famous melodic themes from great composers such as Mozart, Strauss, and Verdi. The 13-track CD is arranged and produced specifically with a child's tastes in mind, featuring lively compositions with frequent changes in tempo and dynamics. $14.98. Available online at www.greatestclassics.com.

For Struggling Learners



When it comes to grade placement should it be based on age and a "cut-off date"? Is misplacement a key to failing test scores and grade-level retention? Jim Grant, author of *Struggling Learners: Below Grade or Wrong Grade?* says yes. The book examines these issues and provides age-based checklists to help educators and parents decide if a child is in the wrong grade and outlines techniques to help students reach their full potential at their own pace. 170 pp. $15.95 from Modern Learning Press. To order, call 800/627-5867 or go to www.modlearn.com.

Explore the World

How can you bake cookies in the sun, remember the difference between latitude and longitude, and

Check this out!
Studying up on homeowners insurance? Check out the program that's received the NEA stamp of approval since 1968.
Horace Mann knows that educators have special needs when it comes to insuring their home and personal property. That's why we designed the NEA Homeowners® Insurance Program.
Make a call that's long overdue. Contact your local Horace Mann representative today, visit us on-line at www.horacemann.com or call 1-800-999-1030 (7 a.m. to 7 p.m. CST Monday through Friday; 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CST Saturday).
The NEA Homeowners® Insurance Program is underwritten by Horace Mann Insurance Company, Teachers Insurance Company, Horace Mann Property & Casualty Insurance Company, and Horace Mann Lloyds.
Horace Mann
Educated Financial Solutions
nea Member Benefits
www.neamb.com
HONT0403

DIVERSITY Calendar

April

April 6—Tartan Day
Scottish-Americans are recognized on this day for their contributions to the United States. Celebrations take place all around the country as well as in some Canadian provinces. Go to www.tartanday.com.

April 6–12—National Library Week
Sponsored by the American Library Association, this week promotes the use and support of all types of libraries. For more, go to www.ala.org/pio/nlw.

April 16 (begins at sundown)—Passover
This festival marks the deliverance of the Jewish people from slavery in Egypt. Traditional seder ceremonies take place during the first two evenings and commemorate the historical idea of freedom. For more, visit www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/passover.

April 20—Easter
On this day Christians throughout the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Many Christians honor this sacred day by attending church services while others celebrate the day with Easter baskets, dyed eggs, candy, and other springtime treats. For more, visit www.educationworld.com/holidays/archives/easter_2000.shtml.

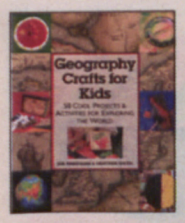
May

May 5—Cinco de Mayo
Mexicans celebrate Cinco de Mayo to commemorate their victory over the French army at the Battle of Puebla in1862. While the largest festivities are in Puebla, other Mexican states and some states along the U.S.-Mexico border celebrate Cinco de Mayo with parades, food, and dancing. Check out www.mexonline.com/cinco.htm.

May 8—Celebration of Buddha's Birthday
Buddhists worldwide celebrate the birthday of Buddha, founder of Buddhism (563 A.D. to 480 B.C.) For more, visit www.religioustolerance.org/buddhism.htm.

May 17—Anniversary of School Desegregation Ruling
On this date in 1954 in the landmark case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional and violated the 14th Amendment clause guaranteeing equal protection under the law. Go to www.archives.gov/digital_classroom/lessons/brown_v_board_documents/brown_v_board.html.

May 19—Victoria Day
Victoria Day celebrates Queen Victoria's reign (1837-1901). Canadians also use this day to observe Queen Elizabeth II's birthday. For more, go to www.kidsturncentral.com/holidays/victoriaday.htm.



master mapmaking? These activities and others in *Geography Crafts for Kids: 50 Cool Projects & Activities for Exploring the World* help kids understand that geography is everywhere, and with a little imagination, glue, and items from home, they can learn basic concepts in geography. $24.95 144 pp. Published by Lark Books. To order, call 800/805-5489 or visit www.larkbooks.com.

Painting the Power of Tradition

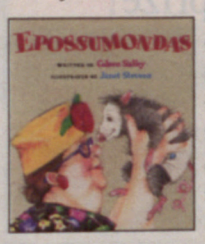
Sacred dances, rock soup, handmade robes, mysterious dreams, and sleeping animals—authors Lise Erdrich and Lisa Fifield combine vivid watercolor paintings and American Indian stories gathered from their oral traditions to form a delightful collection of bedtime stories for children. *Bears Make Rock Soup and Other Stories* shows the power of nature and spirituality in the American Indian tradition. 32 pp. $16.95 from Children's Book Press. To order, visit www.cbookpress.org.

Comics that Teach

Dark Horse Comics offers a series of comics workbooks focused on introducing and advancing basic academic skills. In the first installment, *Word Squad*, young children use their skills to solve mysteries. Exercises are included in the comic books and each comes with another workbook and "canvas" to help children design their own comic books. A set of two comic books, manuscript starter, and comic book canvas start at $11 per set. Quantities over 200 are discounted. Dark Horse can also help educators design custom comic books for their curriculums. For more, visit www.darkhorse.com/services/education.html or call 503/652-8815, ext. 318.

An Unforgettable Creature

Who or what is an Epossumondas? In *Epossumondas*, author Coleen Salley with illustrator Janet



Stevens tells the tale of a muddle-headed opossum from down South who takes everything way too literally. Poor Epossumondas

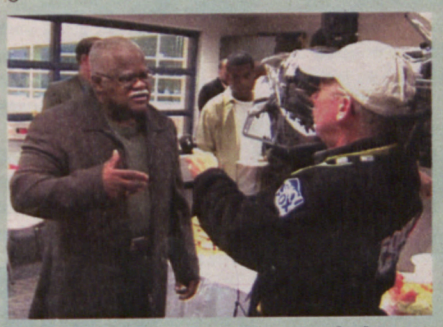
Lights…Cameras…Educate

Media Outreach Helps Build Public Confidence

When NEA President Reg Weaver visits schools across the country, he's often trailed by several newspaper scribes or radio and television reporters. Weaver also does several media interviews every week, offering reporters NEA's views on topics ranging from the threat of vouchers to the need to effectively address and adequately fund the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

It's easy to see why the media seek Weaver out: he's energetic, quotable, and—as a teacher—represents the views of teachers and education support professionals with a great deal of credibility and authority.

But that's just skimming the surface. As public schools are threatened with budget cuts and flattened by mandates from states and the federal government, Weaver—as well as Vice President Dennis Van Roekel and Secretary-Treasurer Lily Eskelsen—has become more engaged in mobilizing public support for public education. The media, including everything from local papers to national television broadcasts, are an important outlet for influencing public opinion with NEA's perspective and ideas on school change.



NEA President Reg Weaver, being interviewed during a recent visit to Kansas City.

"The media can help to shape and frame how people view us in the profession," says Weaver. So he tries to be as accessible as possible to answer media queries and discuss the Association's position on topics critical to the success of public education.

Thus, it wasn't surprising to see Reg in front of a host of microphones, cameras, and reporters at a recent media gathering at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., to discuss the findings of a new NEA report, *Protecting Public Education from Tax Giveaways to Corporations.*

Though some might consider the topic a little dry to pique much media interest, the study received extensive coverage—thanks, in part, to Weaver, Ohio Education Association staffer Fritz Fekete, and other panelists who provided concrete examples to help reporters understand how reducing schools' tax base undermines quality education.

USA Today, the nation's most widely read newspaper (circulation 2.1 million readers), headlined its coverage, "NEA report charges tax breaks cost schools billions." The story by Greg Toppo quoted Weaver's comment that, "With the funding pressures from all sides now hitting public education, hopefully policy makers will focus on protecting schools by making sure that they're not hurt by tax abatements."

News accounts of NEA's study also reached readers of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* (circ. 368,000), the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* (circ. 248,000), and other publications. Some local newspapers wove the study's findings into local accounts of tax breaks and other subsidies, quoting NEA members. Famed consumer advocate Ralph Nader featured the NEA study in his column on Common Dreams News Center (www.commondreams.org), blasting "corporate freeloaders." Trade publications such as *Education Daily* also picked up the story, giving it extensive coverage among education policy makers.

NEA staff also ensure that Weaver's twice-a-month op-ed, which is printed in the *Washington Post* (circ. 812,000) and *Education Week*, is sent to a long list of editorial writers, editors, and opinion makers. This process helps members of the media better understand NEA's positions on critical issues, and some publications even rerun the columns.

NEA's 2.7 million members are a force in the movement for quality public schools for all children. But every movement requires allies, and working closely with the media allows NEA's message to reach citizens in communities across the United States. So if you see a story featuring NEA's views in the local paper, be sure to share it with neighbors or others in your community. It just may change a few minds.

—John O'Neil

For more on *Protecting Public Education from Tax Giveaways to Corporations*, see "NEA Releases Study on Property Tax Handouts" on page 13 of this issue of *NEA Today*.

can't get things right, but his blunders will make you laugh. 40 pp. $16 from Harcourt. To order, call 800/543-1918 or visit www.harcourtbooks.com.

Just Do It

We praise them, admire them, and at times emulate them when we step onto a field, court, ice rink, or track. In *What Is an Athlete?* author Barbara Lehn helps young readers

figure out what an athlete is made of besides Gatorade and a whole lot of sweat. Colorful photos of kids participating in sports accompanies simple text outlining the values of teamwork, determination, and, most of all, having fun! 32 pp. $21.90 from Millbrook Press. To order, visit www.millbrookpress.com or call 800/462-4703.

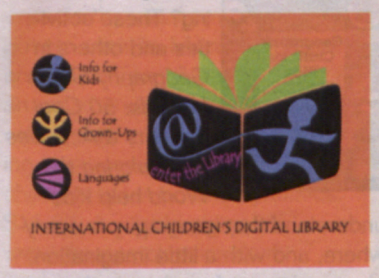
WEB WINNERS

Experts in Ology

At the American Museum of Natural History's science website, you can learn more about genetics, astronomy, and paleontology from scientists, students, and just by clicking through the site. Youngsters can learn about the solar system, dinosaurs, and detailed DNA structures as well as apply their knowledge of all of the "ologys" they have studied. They can also collect and trade Ology cards. Go to www.ology.amnh.org.

Online Children's Library

Internet Archive and the University of Maryland, along with a host of major publishers and the Library of Congress, have compiled the International Children's Digital Library, a searchable archive of more than 200 digitized books in 15 languages and representing 27 cultures. Kids can read entire books online, learning about other cultures on the way. Many ELL students will be able to find books in their native language or dual language books. Accessing the library does take some time, effort, and computer requirements, but plans are underway to make access easier and to expand on the collection of books. Go to www.icdlbooks.org.



Fossil Horse Cyber Museum

This site offers a complete lesson about paleontology and evolution by tracking the fossil record of horses online. The history starts 55 million years ago, with the small dog-sized horse called *Hyracotherium*, and continues through *Equus*, the only surviving genus of what once was a diverse family of mammals. Information is easy to access because lessons are grouped into categories, including Gallery of Fossil Horses and Sedimental Journey. Go to www.flmnh.ufl.edu/natsci/vertpaleo/fhc/firstCM.htm.

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Now **www.neamb.com** offers NEA members more than ever before.

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- special discount programs
- free classroom resources

...and the list just keeps growing.

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Don't forget about the monthly giveaways.
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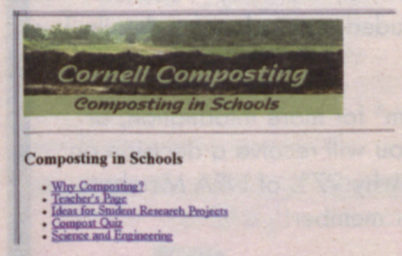
WSNT0403

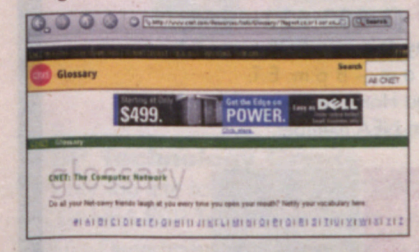
Composting at School

Teach students how nature recycles by composting in the classroom. Developed in part by Cornell University, this site includes explanations of how composting works, K-12 lesson plans, lab activities, and ideas for student research projects. Go to www.cfe.cornell.edu/compost/schools.html.



Techno-speak Made Simple

Are you lost when students start gabbing about avatars, IRC clients, and JAVA files? Well, be baffled no more. Check out C/NET's simple glossary of technology terms. The site is easy to use and bound to improve your tech vocabulary. Go to www.cnet.com/Resources/Info/Glossary/?tag=st.cn.sr1.ssr.cn_ glossary.



Math Solved

Are your students stumbling over decimals and fractions? Help is just a click away with The Math Forum @Drexel. The Math Forum provides resources, materials, activities, mentoring, educational products, and an online community of math educators and students. The site guides students through material at their own pace, helping them apply the lessons to the other math components on the site. Go to www.mathforum.org.

Set a World Record for Girls' Education—April 9, 2003

More than 70 million girls in the world have never attended school and almost 600 million women in the world are illiterate. In developing countries, the education of girls has been proven to be the key factor in determining economic development, better health, and longer life expectancy.

Education is a human right, yet for twice as many girls as boys, it is not a reality.

On April 9, educators and community leaders in 180 countries will join forces for the world's largest teach-in about girls' education. Organized by Education International and the Global Campaign for Education, the lesson will highlight the promises for girls made in international agreements and the role of governments worldwide in fulfilling these promises.

The international blueprint for universal education, the 2000 Dakar Framework for Action, established two primary goals to address the gender gap in education:

- **By 2005, worldwide gender parity in school enrollment**
- **By 2015, 100 percent worldwide enrollment of all children—girls and boys—in basic education.**

In many developing countries, girls are entangled in the downward cycle of child labor and poverty, in which they must work to help support their families and forgo education as a route to economic stability. Inferior education quality, mandatory school fees, and the threat of gender violence also keep girls from attending school.

Education International and development organizations established the Global Campaign for Education to build public pressure for universal, quality, free public education. Education International, of which NEA is a founding member, represents over 27 million educators in 311 national organizations in 159 countries and territories.

To learn more about the campaign and to participate in the world's largest teach-in, visit www.campaignforeducation.org.

NEA Members...

WIN A GRAND PRIZE TRIP OF A LIFETIME, A 7-DAY CRUISE OF ALASKA'S INSIDE PASSAGE!

- **Cruise the Alaskan waters** full of wildlife, dotted with small fishing villages, fjords, and glacially carved mountains.
- **Win great monthly prizes** from Amazon.com, Cooking.com, Lands' End and other great online shopping destinations!
- **Receive valuable discounts** and offers from our special retail partners!

HOW? Sign-up for the FREE OWL*Shopper* Service from OWL.org!

When you install OWL*Shopper* on your PC, a percentage of every purchase you make at over 250 name-brand retailers - from Amazon.com to JCPenney, to Expedia - will go toward helping us to continue to bring you OWL services. *And you pay nothing extra!*

Plus, you could win the trip to Alaska and other great prizes!

IT'S EASY!

1. Make sure you're at the computer where you'll be doing your online shopping
2. Go to **http://www.schoolcash.com/owlshopper** and install OWL*Shopper* or visit **www.owl.org** and click on OWL*Shopper* in the Marketplace—it's FREE!
3. Shop as you normally would at 250+ of your favorite online retailers

That's it! Upon installing OWL*Shopper*, you are entered for the Grand Prize Alaskan Cruise for two! The drawing will be May 15, 2003.

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Just call the NEA Home Financing Program® for more information, or to apply for a mortgage. In most cases, you will receive a decision on the same call.[2] So call today and find out why 97% of NEA Members would recommend the program to another member![3]

Home equity loans and lines of credit are also available through this program, provided by Wells Fargo Home Equity.[4]

Call 1-800-NEA-4-YOU (1-800-632-4968).
Mon. — Fri., 8 a.m. – midnight, Saturday, 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m., E.T.
Home Equity Hours: Mon.— Fri. 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. E.T.
If you prefer, stop by your local Wells Fargo Home Mortgage branch and be sure to mention you're an NEA member.

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Virtual Circus

Through the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey® website, teachers can print and download activities that reinforce classroom lessons and make fundamental skills come alive for students preK-4. Called the CIRCUSWORKS Education Center®, the site contains three online educational lesson units and two special divisions that cover language arts, diversity and geography, and animal care. The curricula were developed with Hot Topics, Bridges to Learning, and 12 consulting teachers. Go to www.Ringling.com/circusworks.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

ESP Technology Grants

It's not too late to apply for the 2003-2004 NEA ESP Technology Grants. NEA's Department of ESP Quality awards the grants, which range from $250 to $3,500, to ESP local Associations for projects that advance NEA's strategic focus of restoring confidence in public education. Last year, the department awarded 17 grants to ESP locals across the country. The application process is open to all local Associations that have not received an ESP Technology Grant in the last three years. For more information or an application, visit www.nea.org/esphome/members/techgrnt.html. Applications must be postmarked by April 15, 2003.

National Teacher Day is Coming

Start looking forward to May 6, National Teacher Day, the time set aside to honor and recognize teachers and the lasting contributions they make to our lives. NEA sponsors this day, which is part of a whole week, May 5-11, designated Teacher Appreciation Week by the National PTA.

Learn to Sign Online

Signing Online, LLC's new learning website, www.signingonline.com, offers a series of four American Sign Language (ASL) courses that teach the basic skills to become fluent in signing. Once people have successfully completed the Signing Online ASL courses, they will be able to carry on a conversation and understand the basics of ASL grammar.

The interactive courses, which cost about $50 each (less if you take more than one), are designed for anyone curious about American Sign Language including parents and friends of deaf and hard of hearing people, workers from service industries, and professionals such as social workers and educators.

Apply for a Job at NASA

NASA is accepting applications for Educator Astronauts—teachers with expertise in K-12 education who will serve as fully qualified members of NASA's Astronaut Corps. Educator Astronauts will be trained to perform all of the functions and responsibilities (space walks, International Space Station deployment, experiment management, etc.) that the Agency's Mission Specialist astronauts are qualified to perform. Educator Astronauts will help lead the Agency to develop new ways to connect space exploration with the classroom and to inspire the next generation of explorers.

Applicants must be certified K-12 educators, with a minimum of three years of in-classroom teaching experience within the past four years. For more information and a complete job description and list of eligibility requirements, or to apply, go to http://edspace.nasa.gov. But hurry, the application deadline is April 30.

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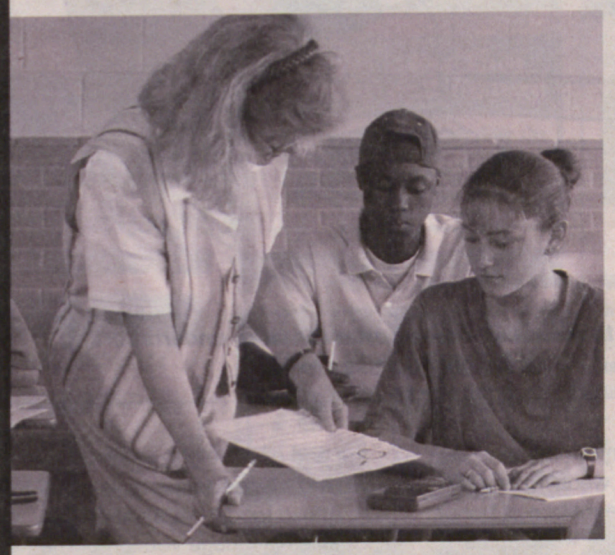

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in the Light Lane

Rebel Artist

A library media specialist, I post my standards in the library on a bulletin board that has been decorated with the cartoon character Sponge Bob. When kids bring me pictures or drawings of the cartoon character, I add it to the background of the bulletin board.

Yesterday, a third grader brought me a new picture. I looked at the full bulletin board and said, "My board is getting very full. I wonder where I can put it?" The quick-thinking third grader had an answer ready. "Why don't you take down one of those standards sheets?"

Natalie Johnson
Wichita, Kansas

My wife substituted recently at the elementary school where I work. Part of her job was to supervise children during recess. At the end of recess, she was to make sure that all of the students were off the playground and heading back to class. Her written plans directed her to "sweep the field." Not understanding, she asked a co-worker: "But it's so big…where do I start?" When told this, I quickly found a broom and brought it to her!

Phil Falk
Edmonds, Washington

A few years ago when I was teaching fourth grade, our class was discussing Hades in Greek mythology. "He was the god of the underworld. Do you know where that is?" I asked. One student answered back, "You mean like Australia?"

Patricia Rebollar
San Jose, California

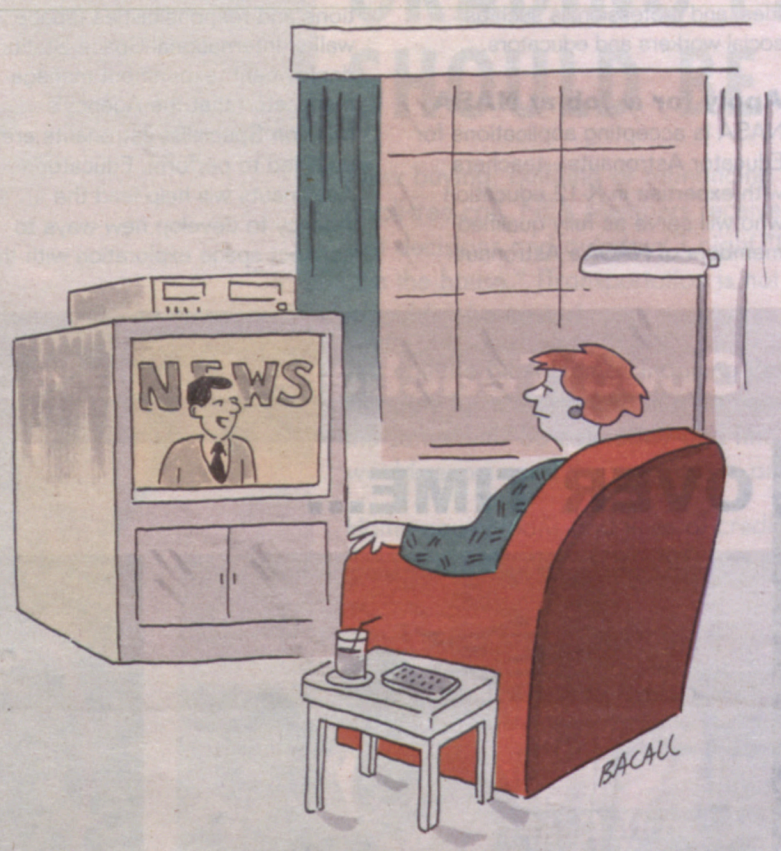
As I greeted my students one Monday morning, A young boy decided to tell me about his weekend. He informed me that he had attended a wedding where his mother was the matron of honor. When I asked whose wedding he attended, he explained, "My mom's best friend. She and her husband renewed their wedding vowels."

Kim Edmonds
Blackstone, Virginia

Got Laughs?

● Have a funny school story, anecdote, or vignette you'd like to share with other NEA members? You can send contributions to "In the Light Lane"
NEA Today
1201 16th St., N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
Fax: 202/822-7206
Send e-mail to neatoday@nea.org.

● Want a classroom chuckle delivered to your e-mail box once a week? Subscribe to the "In the Light Lane" mailing list. Just send an e-mail to join-lightlane@list.nea.org (no subject or message needed).



"Let's go to our education reporter for more underreporting of school success stories."

I teach prekindergarten in a year-round school. I got married over our fall break. When we came back to school, we were outside with the other prekindergarten class.

A little boy in the other class walked up to me and said, "Ms. Hargis, will you please tie my shoe?" I said, "Did you know I got married and my name is different now?" The little boy replied, "Oh, sorry. Mrs. Different, will you please tie my shoe?"

Janna Hargis Cowden
Murfreesboro, Tennessee

A student of mine was signing (using sign language) with her hands as she was walking down the hallway at school. I asked her if she was preparing for a speech or presentation of some sort. "Oh no," she answered, "I'm just talking to myself!" We both had a good laugh over that one.

Lonnie Corpus
Oshkosh, Wisconsin

In conjunction with their Spanish III class, my son and another student come into my kindergarten each week to teach beginning Spanish. At the end of the eight-week course, we have a special party. In addition to ethnic foods, we showed the Spanish-language version of the movie *Toy Story*. About 30 seconds into the film, one of my kindergartners stood up and shouted, "Mrs. Miller, Woody speaks Spanish!"

Cathy Miller
Cynthiana, Kentucky

As a special education teacher who is hearing-impaired, I often get questions from students about my hearing aids. One of my third-grade resource room students was especially curious and wanted to know how hearing aids worked.

So I took off my hearing aid and proceeded to explain how it helped me to hear. I showed him the battery, the volume control, and the tiny wires inside of it. As I put the hearing aid back in my ear, he looked at me in amazement and asked, "Are you a robot?"

Maureen Briggs
Plainville, Connecticut

One of my students was having a challenging day. After we reviewed the math lesson four times, he began moaning that he was dumb. I reminded him that he was not dumb, but that he learned at a slower pace than other students. His indignant reply: "I'm not a slow learner, just a fast forgetter." Most of us over 50 can relate to that!

Mary Meyer
Keokuk, Iowa

Tot Teacher

Just saw this sign in front of a daycare facility in Merrimack, New Hampshire. It's been up a few weeks, so I guess it's a hard position to fill!

Wanted: a 2-year-old teacher

Suzy Portnoy-McKinnon
Merrimack, New Hampshire

A number of years ago, when I was teaching a group of kindergartners, we were learning about the weather and how it affected our lives. I inserted the word "season" in our discussion; then I asked the group whether anyone knew the four seasons of the year.

A five-year-old boy quickly raised his hand and immediately answered: "Yes, I know the four seasons of the year. They are football, basketball, baseball, and golf."

Robbie Brown
Katy, Texas

My sixth-grade homeroom was turning proper nouns into adjectives. Examples were England ("We speak the English language"), Italy ("I love Italian food"), and so on. When Canada came up, one student answered, "My mom drinks Canadian Mist"!

Paul Beckwith
Angola, Indiana

During my daughter's first year of kindergarten, she often had to stay after school with Mommy for special meetings. On the drive home one afternoon, she asked, "What is jail?" I replied, "It's a place where a person has to stay for a long time to pay for doing something bad and can't leave without permission."

"Oh," she said, "sort of like a faculty meeting." Exactly!

Tammy Huffman
Castlewood, Virginia

One of my third graders gave me a lovely necklace as an end-of-the-year present. When I expressed my joy at receiving such a beautiful necklace, the student explained, "Oh, don't worry about it. It was free. My mother works at Avon."

Leah Korba
Saugus, Massachusetts

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Miscellaneous

Workcomp hell? Moldy classroom? This teacher's story can help. Email: nadinereed@d-web.com.

www.ititeachertraining.com. ITI--Increase Teacher Income thru 501c3 tax-exempt programs.

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†Annual fee for the NEA *Platinum Plus* and NEA School Days credit cards: None. The Indexed Annual Percentage Rates (APRs) for purchases and cash advances are 9.4% for the NEA *Platinum Plus* card and 11.35% for the NEA School Days card: each Indexed Rate APR may vary. The current introductory APR offer for Balance Transfers and Credit Card Cash Advance Checks made with either account is 1.9% through your first six statement closing dates effective upon the opening of your account. If your minimum monthly payment is late (*i.e.*, not received by 2 p.m., ET, on its Payment Due Date), or when the introductory APR expires, the non-introductory APR for your account ("Indexed Rate") is calculated using the Variable-Rate Information. If your payment is late, the Indexed Rate is applied to new and outstanding cash advance balances (consisting of Balance Transfer and Cash Advance Check transactions) as of the first day of the billing cycle in which the payment was late or not received. Transaction fee for Bank and ATM cash advances; credit card cash advance checks and balance transfers is 2% of each cash advance ($2 minimum, $30 maximum). Transaction fee for the purchase of wire transfers, person-to-person money transfers, money orders, bets, lottery tickets and casino gaming chips is 2% of each such purchase ($2 minimum, $30 maximum). **Transaction fees are waived on transactions requested with your application. MBNA allocates your payments to balances (including new transactions) with lower APRs before balances with higher APRs.** Balance transfers and/or cash advances of any kind may not be used to pay off or pay down any other MBNA account. If your available credit cannot accommodate any transaction, fee and/or finance charge, the account will be subject to over-the-credit-limit costs. The introductory APR is not applicable to Bank and ATM Cash Advances. **REMINDER:** To obtain the benefits of the grace period for new purchases, you must pay your New Balance Total in full and on time.

‡Certain restrictions apply to each benefit as described in the benefits brochures which are sent soon after your account is opened. NEA School Days Card Customer benefits differ from those available with the NEA *Platinum Plus* account, *i.e.*, benefit coverage amounts are lower and MasterPurchase protection is not available.

NEA School Days Card credit line runs from $500 to $5,000, while NEA *Platinum Plus* credit line is from $5,500 to $100,000 for eligible applicants.

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Absolutely NO membership dues are used to market this program.

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The NEA Credit Card Program® has been developed for NEA members and their families only. If a member decides not to renew membership, that person and his/her family will no longer be eligible to receive the preferred rates, fees and special promotions offered through the NEA Credit Card Program. If eligible, a replacement card will be offered. Any account opened in response to this offer will be governed by the laws of Delaware.

The information about the costs of the cards described in this application was accurate as of 4/2003. The information may have changed. To find out what may have changed, please call (888) 758-7946. TTY users please call (800) 833-6262.

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